"ACTIVE AND PASSIVE POTENCY" IN THOMISTIC ANGELOLOGY

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PREFACE

A. "SEPARATE SUBSTANCES" AND/OR "ANGELS"?

It is interesting to note that, in an expressly theological treatise such as the *Summa theologiae*, St. Thomas generally uses the term "angel", in preference to "separate substance"; while in works with a less explicit theological intent – e.g. the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *De substantiis separatis* [1] – he generally prefers the term "separate substance".

But at any rate there is little doubt that the two terms, "separate substance" and "angel" have a certain interchangeability and equivalence in the works of St. Thomas. In other words, "the separate substance" is equivalent to "the angel, insofar as its existence and attributes are knowable through human reason alone". And this has led Karl Barth [2] to charge that St. Thomas' angelology is primarily a philosophical presentation, with little relevance to theology.

[1] We might say that these works are "philosophical" insofar as arguments from reason are emphasized in them, rather than arguments from revelation or faith. However, as Lescoe points out (in the Introduction to his edition of the *De substantiis separatis*, p. 8), the treatise on separate substances leads up to theological subject-matter in Ch.'s XVII ff. – namely, an exposition of Catholic teaching as found in Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, and especially Dionysius. And Chenu maintains that the *Summa contra gentiles* is basically a theological work, because it not only leads up to theological subject-matter in Bk. IV, but also follows a theological *order* – beginning with God and proceeding afterwards to treat of creatures in relation to God (cf. *Introduction à l'étude de Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1950, p. 251-252).

[2] Cf. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (Zurich : Evangelischer Verlag A. G. Zollikon, 1950), III, 3, p. 455 : "Die, die in der Bibel Engel heissen, sind bei dem vom Thomas geführten Beweis der Existenz jener *substantiae separatae* überhaupt nicht gesehen, geschweige denn, dass mit jenen 8 Gründen irgend etwas für oder gegen oder über ihre Existenz ausgemacht, irgend etwas Sinnvolles von ihnen ausgesagt wäre. Und das, was Thomas

Is Thomistic angelology a philosophy or theology? or both? or neither? The answer to this question is very difficult to give. For one thing, the attempt to answer it is complicated by the fact that St. Thomas' angelology is derived historically from multiple sources – Christian and non-Christian [3];

auf die so oder anders bewiesene Existenz dieser *substantiae separatae* nachher aufgebaut hat, ist etwas Anderes als eine Lehre von den Engeln im christlichen, im biblischen Sinn dieses Begriffs. Thomas hat in dieser Beweisfuhrüng Philosophie, und zwar (in viel eindeutigerer Weise als "Dionysius" bei seinem Ansatz) nur Philosophie und gar nicht Theologie getrieben". And Barth concludes, in a very negative tone, "Im Ganzen und grundsätzlich ... wird man an einem klassischen Exempel lernen können, wie man es in dieser Sache auf alle Fälle nicht machen darf". Barth's opinion of Thomistic angelology is not completely negative, however; for he emphasizes that Thomas' disquisitions on "separate substances"are preferable to the many superfluous theological/philosophical speculations about angels to be found among the moderns (cf. *ibid.*, p. 475f).

[3] Gilson, in *Le Thomisme* (Paris : Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1965), pp. 209-212, follows Schmid and Balamker in tracing the Thomistic doctrine of the angels to three main sources : 1) The astronomical theories of Plato and Aristotle, which hypothesized that the heavenly bodies were moved by divine intelligences or souls; 2) the Neo-platonic tradition of hierarchies of pure intelligences, considered as degrees of being (this tradition begins with Plotinus, was further elaborated by Porphyry, Jamblichus and especially Proclus; and culminated in the "celestial hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius); and 3) the Biblical accounts of angels and demons. These three sources gradually fused together in the middle ages, especially through the influence of the Arabian philosophers, who began a) to identify the angels of the Bible or Koran with the Neo-Platonic Intelligences, and/or b) to assimilate the Neo-Platonic Intelligences to the celestial movers found in Plato's or Aristotle's cosmology.

To Gilson's analysis we might add the observations that Patristic sources in general (not just Dionysius) were influential in contributing to the formulations of Thomistic angelology; and that the traditional order of topics in 11th and 12th century theological treatises (i.e. (a) God; (b) the act of creation; and (c) the production of angels and men, and the fall of the demons and Adam and Eve) required a close scrutiny of the problems of angelology as a matter of course in the study of theology (cf. Collins, *The Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels*; Washington, D.C. : Catholic University of America Press, 1947, p. xi).

It should be noted, however, that in St. Thomas' estimation, one non-Biblical source of angelology overshadowed all the other non-Biblical sources : namely, the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius. What St. Thomas says of Dionysius in his last treatise on angelology (*De Substantiis Separatis*) characterizes Thomas' consistent deference to Dionysius in all angelogical speculations : "... utemur praecipue Dionysii documentis, qui super alio ea quae ad spirituales substantias pertinent, excellentius tradidit".

Some may consider it regrettable that Thomas gave so much credence to an authority who (as it became evident during the Renaissance) fraudulenty claimed to be a disciple of the Apostle Paul, but was actually a Christian Neo-Platonist who lived several centuries after Paul. However "Dionysius", in spite of his imposture, was a theologian of unusual stature; and St. Thomas' respect for Dionysius was not unwarranted. Even Barth, who

and one must make a value-judgment concerning these respective sources, and concerning the possibility of their mutual amalgamation or "synthesizability'. And then again (and here we have a more subtle problem), the terms, "philosophical" and "theological" do not at all have univocal meanings [4]. Thus we are also constrained to clarify the respective denotations of these terms, before we proceed to assess the relative philosophical-theological value of Thomistic angelology.

Therefore, in proceeding to make this assessment, we will consider the following topics in order : 1) the meaning of the terms, "philosophy" and "theology"; 2) the mutual relationship between philosophy and theology; 3) the viability of the separate-substance/angel synthesis.

1. "Philosophy" and "theology"

Since neither philosophy nor theology is an object or entity with relatively stable features, one cannot define them in the way that he would define a tree or horse or a house. The fact is, both philosophy and theology are primarily actions – things that people *do*, at a particular time and place.

is quite critical of the sources upon which Thomas draws, makes an exception in the case of Dionysius : "Gegen der Schwulst seiner Sprache und seines Stils und gegen die oft wirklich geschwätzige Dunkelheit oder dunkle Geschwätzigkeit seiner Darstellungsweise sind seit der Aufdeckung der literarischen Fälschung, deren er sich schuldig gemacht hat, von jeher viele und berechtigte Beschwerden erhoben worden. Das Alles ändert aber nichts daran, dass seine Schrift ein in seinen Grenzen origineller und meisterhafter Wurf zu nennen ist : von der Art, wie sie in der Geschichte der Theologie nicht zu oft vorgekommen sind. Dass die ihrer Zeit und dann dem ganzen Mittelalter, dessen grosse Denker schliesslich auch Sinn für Qualität hatten, so Eindruck gemacht hat, geschah nun doch nicht von ungefähr und ist mit dem gefälschten Autornamen allein nicht zu erklären. Der diesen Wurf gewagt hat, war nicht der erste Beste. Er hätte der Maskerade als Paulus-Schüler nicht bedurft, um sich Bedeutung zu verschaffen. Gerade als Angelologie ist seine 'himmlische Hierarchie' ein bemerkenswertes und lehrreiches Unternehmen. Und diese Anerkennung kann sich nicht einmal bloss auf das Formale beziehen" (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, III, 3, p. 449).

[4] For example, compare Barth, who takes the apocalypse of John as the prototype of all theology (*op. cit.*, p. 557) with Gilson, who says "... puisqu'elle est la science du divin, la métaphysique d'Aristote a pleinement droit au titre de science divin, ou théologie. Elle est même théologie au sens ultime de ce titre. Comme il n'y a pas d'êtres plus divins que ceux dont s'occupe la *Métaphysique*, il n'y a place pour aucune théologie, ni d'ailleurs pour aucune science, après celle-là" (cf. Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 217). Gilson, of course, distinguishes Aristotle's "natural" theology from "revealed" theology. But even so, Barth would not be so willing as Gilson to grant that this natural theology of Aristotle is "theology in the basic (*ultime*) sense of the word".

And our definition of philosophy or theology depends in great part on the judgements we make concerning what the philosophers or theologians we are acquainted with are *doing*.

To one who lived in pre-Pythagorean times, philosophy would mean an endeavor to know all things, human and divine, and the principles and causes of all facts. To a follower of Socrates, on the other hand, it would mean being a lover of "wisdom" in the moral sense of that word. For an Aristotelian it would imply the pursuit of all rational wisdom – including natural philosophy, moral philosophy and metaphysics. For a Thomist, it means the investigation of first causes and principles, by the use of reason. For many contemporaries, it may connote preeminently language analysis, or logical atomism, or the philosophy of science.

The term, "theology", has undergone similar vicissitudes. The ancient Greeks used the term to refer to the mythologies or cosmogonies of Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod and other poets. This usage continues on through Aristotle (cf. e.g. *Metaph.* III, 4), although in its preeminent sense Aristotle makes "theology" equivalent to "first philosophy" (cf. *Metaph.* VI, 1; XI, 7; and *alibi*). The custom of referring to ancient poets as "theologians" is found also in the Patristic era, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen and others. Augustine distinguishes *vera theologica* (Platonic philosophy) from *theologia fabulosa* (poetry) and from *theologia naturalis* (the interpretations of the world and nature offered by Varro and the Stoics). But then gradually the "epistemological" meaning of theology which is common today, at least in Catholic circles, began to take root – namely, theology as "the rational elaboration of revealed truths" [5].

The question naturally arises – is there anything *in common* that has been *done* by such a wide variety of philosophers? or by such a wide variety of theologians? (The most that one could expect to discover here is a very general trend).

It would not seem to be an overgeneralization to say that the act of philosophizing, in all of its diverse formulations in the Western World, has characteristically been concerned with the elaboration of a "world view", and with the systematic examination of meanings and values; and that the act of "theologizing' in the Western World has been characterized by a methodical emphasis on that which (depending on the particular culture involved) is considered to be a symbolic or mythic insight into the realm of mystery, or a supernatural revelation of the boundaries or horizons of what was considered to be "the knowable".

[5] Cf. *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique* (1964), article on "theology".

Therefore in philosophy we discern a general trend towards the expansion of the frontiers of knowledge to its furthest horizons (in Aristotelian terms this would mean that which is most intelligible "in itself", although least intelligible "to us"). But in theology, we might say that one begins with some representation or vision of these "horizons" themselves, which are conceived not as a terminus or limit but as a positive starting point; and thereupon attempts to place immanent existence in the context of certain transcendent "mysteries". (Admittedly it will be difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between these trends in many cases, since philosophical speculation is often allied with theological vision, or vice versa. The trends become easily discernable only in certain paradigmatic cases – e.g. Aristotle's elaborate deduction of the existence of a Prime Mover in his *Physics*, as contrasted with e.g. the revelations made to Ezekiel in the Old Testament)

2. The interrelationship of philosophy and theology

The development of philosophy and theology, respectively, and their eventual interrelationship, can be understood in the light of this bifurcation of trends or orientations :

Theology at its inception (i.e. at the beginning of an oral tradition, or at the time of the writing of the primary scriptures) is essentially the expression (often in metaphorical or parabolic form) of the visions of, or revelations made to, the prophet or seer. This expression of the transcendent is explicated by the experts, the theologians, exegetes or sages, in terms of its multiple connotations, implications and applications. The original expression may also be translated into other languages; and this translation will require not only the former type of explication, but also explication with reference to the original language and its cultural contexts. Finally, at a certain stage along the way, it is to be expected that there will be attempts to incorporate all these enunciations and interpretations into some highly organized world view (a philosophy or system of philosophy).

Philosophy, on the other hand, shows a trend from the beginning to set meanings in more and more "fundamental" contexts (leading to first philosophy, philosophy of knowledge, metaphilosophy, etc.); and to arrange or organize values (moral, political, esthetic) in some sort of hierarchy (this of course becomes a very subjective process, and sometimes only negative and indirect, in the case of philosophies which do not recognize "objective" values). As philosophy arrives at more ultimate contexts of meaning and at higher hierarchies of values, it extends the world view of a particular culture. But the horizons of this world view – no matter how all-encompass-

ing the world view may be – are always necessarily obscure, even pure negations. For they are only horizons, ultimate boundaries of intellectual vision. And it just so happens that these horizons converge with the subject-matter of theology – the afterlife (the horizon of man's temporal existence), freedom (the horizon of human determinisms), God (the horizon of the world and/or of human consciousness), the perfect human community (the horizon of man's social efforts), and so forth. Depending on the predilections of the individual philosopher, such "theological" notions may either represent the completely unknowable or non-existent; or, more optimistically, they may allow him to consider his own horizons not just as limits, but as possible *vestibules* to a transcendent realm.

If a theology does arrive at the point of rapprochement with some systematized philosophical world view; or if, conversely, a philosophy establishes itself at its horizons in a positive relationship to a certain theological persuasion – what is the effect of the resultant assimilation, incorporation, or synthesis?

With regard to philosophy, we could say that the "horizons" of thought take on new aspects as they are brought into relationship to theological beliefs. For example, a belief in "transubstantiation" gives the aspect of dependence and transience to the notion of "substance", which in Aristotelian philosophy was the epitome of stability and ultimacy; the "hypostatic union", attributed to Christ's human nature, presents the soul-body relationship as a bridge to the divine; and when the "separate substance" of Aristotle is represented as "angel", we necessarily confront heaven as the ultimate context for the separate substance. Other effects are also conceivable : a philosophy might recoil from its encounter with theology, and be changed correspondingly [6]; or the inadequacies or inconsistencies in a philosophical system might be corrected through the encounter [7]; or the world-view of a philosophy might be altered or distorted to make it "fit" the requirements of some theology [8].

[6] For example, Jean-Paul Sartre arrived at the notion of God as the possibility of a synthesis of the *en-soi* and the *pour-soi*, and rejected this possibility resolutely – with the result that throughout Sartre's philosophy (as contrasted, e.g. with Hegel's philosophy) the *en-soi* must be radically sundered from the *pour-soi*.

[7] Some might say, for example, that the Aristotelian equation of being and substance was beneficially superseded by the Thomistic notion of being as being (*esse*). See Gilson, *op. cit.*, p. 455.

[8] Some have criticized St. Thomas for extending certain Aristotelian notions beyond their proper bounds. For example, Sir David Ross in *Aristotle* (N.Y. : Barnes and Noble, 1964, p. 183) criticizes Thomas for doing this in regard to the question of God's knowledge of the world.

In the case of theology, it could be argued conversely that the process of revelation is brought to completion by being made relevant to some particular philosophical world view (such that the mysteries and symbols of theology are shown to be mysteries germane to, and developing from, *my* world view, or the world view of my cultural milieu). Sometimes, however it happens that through the influence of philosophy, what was formerly considered to be a mystery is demystified [9], possibly for the benefit of theology (insofar as the theological "sphere" becomes better defined and delimited as a result), or possibly to the detriment of theology (insofar as there is a tendency to accept partial demystifications as the obliteration of mystery, and the triumph of "science", in human life). Sometimes also it may happen that mysteries become solidified and ossified in certain technical formulations (e.g. Aristotelian expressions), to the detriment of theology.

Perhaps it might be best to describe the mutual relationship of philosophy and theology in accord with the Fichtean paradox: The ultimate context for all knowledge is mystery (the unknown, the realm of faith); but the ultimate teleology of all mystery is its gradual demystification in and through philosophy – a process that is never finished for finite consciousness [10].

If this characterization of the relationship of philosophy to theology be not unacceptable, certain corollaries will follow : For one thing, it is obvious that if a theology is going to be expressed in terms of some philosophical world view, the philosophy chosen should be based, if possible, on an acceptable philosophy of nature. (Of course, one can never be certain that even an unimpeachable cosmology will not finally prove to be false, as science advances). Also, it should be realized that, whatever philosophical framework a theology chooses for itself, it will eventually have to identify with the orientation of this framework. For example, a theology expressing itself through an epistemologically-oriented philosophy such as the Kantian philosophy, will become epistemological (e.g. trying to find within the ego, or within the mind, the conditions for the possibility of a belief in Christ, or salvation).

What about a professedly atheistic philosophy? Is such a philosophy

[9] Examples of this might be Teilhard de Chardin's attempt to demystify the Christian doctrine of the "Mystical Body", by explaining it in terms of an evolution towards a "communal consciousness"; or Jung's explanation of the Virgin Birth in terms of certain Archetypes of the "collective unconscious", which condition the way that individuals and societal milieux view the world.

[10] Of course, there is the presupposition here that knowledge is limited by the unknown, that the unknown is not just nothing, and that the unknown is related to the known and is either at least partially knowable or presentable in terms of the knowable.

ipso facto an unsuitable conveyance for the expression of a theology? This might be the case, if it were in fact possible to demonstrate the non-existence of God. But it is doubtful whether such a demonstration will ever be possible [11]. And it is not inconceivable that we might follow the principles of an atheistic philosophy on to a different conclusion than its author or proponents arrived at [12].

What about a philosophy that professes to have assimilated and superseded religion and religious faith – such as the System of Hegel? Could a theology conceivably find its expression in and through such a philosophy, without self-compromise? But still, one must realize that there *is* a sense according to which knowledge knows the unknown, and can reduce it to systems and "assimilate" it; just as there is also a sense in which religious faith must often direct its attention to what would properly be called objects of philosophy – e.g., existence, love, life, time, freedom – and attend to these objects precisely as mysteries of faith. And thus, from the point of view of theology, or more precisely from a meta-study [13] of the relationship between reason and revelation, there would not necessarily be any inconsistency in a theology being incorporated in such a philosophical system – even though extravagant claims about the assimilation of religion may have been advanced by the protagonists of that system.

How could one summarize the relationship between theology and philosophy? It would seem that as a theology develops it will very likely arrive at such a level of sophistication that its proponents will contemplate the possibility of expressing it in terms of a philosophical worldview. If it becomes expressed in this way, it becomes, no doubt, a philosophical theology, and not just a systematic or "scientific" theology. Insofar as the theology of St. Thomas was formulated so systematically in Aristotelian

[11] See *infra*, p. 15.

[12] For instance, even though Sartre was unable to fathom the possibility of a reconciliation of the *en-soi* and *pour-soi* in God, we might be able to do so, if we could show that Sartre had a faulty understanding of what is meant by "God".

[13] Would such a "meta-study" be a philosophy or theology? Or both? Or neither?. If such a meta-study were concerned with defining the boundaries of the knowable, it would seem to be epistemological (or phenomenological). But if it were concerned with defining the relationship between philosophy and theology, would it be a metaphilosophy? And if it were an instance of *fides quaerens intellectum*, i.e. theology trying to elucidate its relationship to philosophy from the vantage point of revelation, would it be a meta-theology? Or could one study the relationship between faith and reason in such a way as to assume the vantage point neither of faith nor of reason, but above them both? If this latter perspective were possible and feasible, there would seem to be an especially ponderous problem of naming or defining the discipline involved.

terms, and influenced by the Aristotelian world view, it must be called a "philosophical" theology. Some critics would say that such a "combination" must amount to a betrayal of philosophy and/or theology. And there is no doubt that theology could "sell its soul" to philosophy. But it also seems clear that a theology could be incorporated in, and expressed by, a philosophy, just as a system of revelation can be incorporated in, and expressed by, any arbitrary system of language. In other words, philosophy can, in a sense, be a language for theology; just as theology can, in a sense, supply a subject-matter or content to philosophy. Whether a particular theology, in coming to "speak according to" a particular philosophy, betrays itself, is very difficult to adjudicate. This must perhaps be decided very subjectively, on the basis of whether or not an individual discerns signs of rigidity, ossification, and weakening vitality in such a "philosophical" theology.

3. The viability of the separate-substance/angel synthesis

The claim has been made [14] that the Biblical figure of the "angel" is hardly recognizable in St. Thomas' angelology, because of St. Thomas' undue assimilation of the angel to the "*substantiae separatae*" of Aristotle. In other words, the question is raised as to the viability of the synthesis which Thomas has effected with Aristotle – at least as regards his doctrine on the angels.

One of the first problems that *we* would have in approving such a synthesis is, of course, the fact that the separate substances of Aristotle seem to be anachronisms tied in with an outmoded and faulty cosmology. For separate substances in the Aristotelian universe were considered to be the various "unmoved movers" (subordinate to the Prime Mover) in charge of fostering and perpetuating movement in the 55 concentric "spheres" of the universe. If the concept of a "separate substance" is necessarily tied to a particular cosmology, we might argue that it was injudicious, at least, to ground one's theological doctrine on such "shifting sands". However, this is emphatically an argument from our historical standpoint – a standpoint which has witnessed the rise and fall of a good number of scientific hypotheses about the nature of the cosmos. St. Thomas, living in an era when scientific hypotheses were more stable than nations and empires – could not be expected to have our awareness of the ephemeral nature of cosmological theories. However, he does make a rather laudable effort

[14] See p. 1, n. 2, *supra*.

in a number of places [15] to demonstrate that the existence of each individual separate substance is not dependent upon the existence of the various Aristotelian "spheres". Whether or not he was successful in this endeavor, we should note that it was absolutely *necessary* that St. Thomas should *make* such an effort to disassociate the separate substances from their traditional functions. For otherwise he would be guilty of the incongruity of identifying such Biblical figures as the seraphim and the cherubim and even the guardian angels with metaphysical unmoved movers whose job it was to keep the stars and planets in motion! [16]

But even if we grant that St. Thomas was successful in proving the independence of separate substances from such supposed functional roles – he still faced another formidable problem : to assimilate the Judaeo-Christian idea of a *created* spirit to the concept of a unmoved mover in an eternal uncreated universe. In order to do this, Thomas had to strain some of the Aristotelian principles to their innermost limits : The separate substances would have to be forms without matter. Since this seemed to be incompatible with the Aristotelian notion of "form", Thomas overcame the apparent deficiency of the Aristotelian system by the introduction of his own concept of a "form of forms" (*esse*) into the discussion, thus creating a new act/potency distinction [17]. Since the angel was conceived as both incorporeal and created, St. Thomas also had to transcend the *Aristotelian* notion of potency (which seems equivalent to corporeality) to introduce the peculiarly Thomistic concept of an incorporeal potency [18]. (The more or less consistent effort on the part of Mediaeval apologists to defend the absolute incorporeality of all angels led occasionally to some vacillation with passages where Aristotle seems to refer to animated bodies in the celestial regions [19].

[15] Cf. e.g. *De substantiis separatis* (Lescoe ed.), para. 12; and *Summa Theol.* I, q. 50, art. 3, ad. 3.

[16] One further factor that might seem offhand to nullify the viability of the separate-substance/angel synthesis is the inconclusive nature of the "proofs" for the existence of angels, which are given by St. Thomas. But, as I will attempt to show in section B of this Preface, the demonstration of the existence of x does not seem to be a constant and necessary condition for the viability and significance of all subsequent discussion of x.

[17] Cf. p. 11, *infra*.

[18] Cf. p. 41, *infra*; see also my article, "The Multiplicity and Individuality of Intellects : a Re-Examination of St. Thomas' Reaction to Averoes", in *Divus Thomas*, Fasc. II, 1971, p. 167.

[19] For example, Aristotle in *De Anima* 434b, 2ff, speaks of a non-generable movent body with a soul, and also with sensation. Albertus Magnus in his commentary on the *De Anima* (III, 5, 1) seems to read Aristotle's question, "why would it not have sensation?" as a statement to the effect that the ungenerated body *does not* have sensation. Thomas

Then again, a difficulty arose with the individuation of separate substances (since in the Aristotelian system individuation seems to be based on an essential relationship to matter); and St. Thomas resorted to the Aristotelian concepts of species and genera to explain the differentiation of angels [20]. (With the result that each angel is a different species – something formidable for the imagination to grasp). And likewise, some extremely knotty problems arose in regard to the angelic intellect : Since angels were incorporeal, the Aristotelian concept of a potential or "possible" (i.e., receptive [21]) intellect

Aquinas, however, in his own commentary (ca. 1270) on the *De Anima* (III, 17) offers a general criticism of those who construe Aristotle 's statement in this fashion, and gives his own interpretation : that Aristotle is here referring to the "demons" of the Platonists. But later (ca. 1272?) in the *De substantiis separatis* he states that Aristotle never referred to demons in his writings (cf. *op. cit.*, Ch. IV, 18, Lescoe ed.). In regard to another text in the *De Anima* (414b, 18ff) where Aristotle seems to speak of higher intelligences with the power of sensation, the positions of Thomas and Albert are reversed : Albert (II, 1, 10) sees this as a reference to demons, but Thomas says it would refer to "corporibus caelestibus, si tamen sunt animata" which would seem to imply that Aristotle is not speaking here of demons, since, according to Thomas (cf. *In de anima* III, 17) demons are not celestial bodies but bodies of certain ethereal animals, *corpora quorumdam animalium aerorum*). In a slightly earlier statement, however (*De spiritualibus creaturis*, ca. 1267), St. Thomas is more definite about the existence of some type of animation in celestial bodies : "Quaedam substantiae spirituales erunt fines motuum caelestium corporum, quae sunt omnino abstractae, et corporibus non unitae. Aliae vero uniuntur corporibus caelestibus per modum quo motor unitur mobili. ... Non est ... negandum haec corpora caelestia esse animata, si per animationem nihil aliud intelligatur quam unio motoris ad mobile" (cf. *op. cit.*, VI, c).

Although St. Thomas does not retract his position that animated celestial bodies are part of the Aristotelian universe, he maintains to the end that *angels* are strictly immaterial substances. However, it is interesting to note that the last chapter of the *De substantiis separatis*, which is St. Thomas' last statement on angelology, and which was left unfinished, makes an extremely strong case against the possibility of purely spiritual substances ever sinning, and thus becoming "devils" in the Biblical sense. In other words, in an indirect way, St. Thomas raises the question as to whether or not those Fathers of the Church who attributed the possibility of sin in the angels to the fact of the possession of some type of (ethereal) body — may not have been right, after all. This question is left unanswered.

N.B. : In estimating the chronology of the works of St. Thomas, I am following the chronology given by I.T. Eschmann, O.P., in the appendix to the English translation of Gilson's *Le Thomisme* (cf. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, N.Y., Random House, 1956, pp. 381-430). Eschmann is uncertain about the chronology of *De substantiis separatis*, but seems inclined to set the *terminus a quo* for its composition at 1270.

[20] *S. Th.*, I, q. 50, a. 4; see also *infra*, p. 84 f.

[21] Cf. e.g. *De Anima* 429b, 24. Even if the "possible" intellect is an immaterial potency, as St. Thomas maintains, its necessity would be related to the reception of material forms through discursive thought — which could not obtain in the case of the angels.

would not seem to apply to them; therefore they must be endowed with fully actual cognition, knowing everything continuously, and not being capable of progressing in knowledge – at least in our sense of progression. (Aside from problems of imagining such a state of intellection, corollary questions arise concerning passages in scripture where angels are depicted as passing from a state of a lack of knowledge to a state of knowledge).

In theological-philosophical speculations such as these, did St. Thomas do violence to the philosophy of Aristotle, forcing it into unnatural molds? or did he simply apply and extend basic Aristotelian principles in new and sometimes ingenious ways? It must at least be admitted that Thomas' attempted synthesis of the Biblical notion of the angel with the separate substances of Aristotle supplied many "test cases" for fundamental Aristotelian notions, test cases which supplied a springboard beyond Aristotelianism (or, some might prefer to say, out of Aristotelianism). But all in all, St. Thomas shows such a consistent respect for the principles of Aristotle that perhaps not even Aristotle himself could give a definitive answer to the question, "did Thomas Aquinas do violence to the principles of Aristotle?" Zeal, if it oversteps a very subtle boundary line, *may* become impiety.

But perhaps an even more urgent question is this : Were St. Thomas' philosophical-theological speculations about angels beneficial or detrimental to the development of a theology of the angels? In order to respond to this question, one must draw a distinction between historical epochs. With reference to the development of theology in the Middle Ages, it would seem that Thomistic angelology was a benefit to theology. For with admirable skill it incorporated the theological figure of the angel into a philosophical world view which was becoming contemporary in the 13th century, and would indirectly affect all levels of mediaeval culture. It explicated a mystery of faith in terms of philosophical insights, and in terms of current cosmological theories, and thus made this mystery more relevant (although not, of course, more *true*) for mediaeval man. But insofar as Thomistic angelology after the death of St. Thomas often became subordinate to a rather formalized scholasticism, and insofar as angelology, along with other elements of Catholic theology, became progressively more philosophical and less scriptural after the Protestant Reformation – it would seem that theology's concern with faith and revelation became de-emphasized; and this no doubt could be an impediment to the future development of Catholic theology [22].

In conclusion, it would seem that, historically speaking, the separate-

[22] "Could be considered an impediment", that is, if current Catholic theology continues to rely so predominantly on St. Thomas' philosophical-theological synthesis that scriptural exegesis is impeded thereby, or that the possibilities of the incorporation of a theology of the angels into current world views are left unexplored.

substance/angel synthesis was a viable synthesis a) insofar as it translated the Biblical figure of the angel out of the realms of devotion (and sometimes of superstition) and into the mainstream of the Mediaeval philosophical world view; and b) insofar as it constituted an integral part (albeit perhaps the most audaciously speculative part) of St. Thomas' unparalleled architecture of a new and comprehensive system of philosophical theology. The viability of this synthesis during modern times, however, has been limited not only a) by the tenuous (i.e., insufficiently tenuous) connection of the "separate substance" with an outmoded cosmology; but also b) by the all too human tendency to absolutize some very interesting and perhaps valid speculations into dogmatic principles; and c) by the not infrequent failure of philosophical theology to maintain the autonomy of its own perspective, i.e. the perspective of faith and revelation, while utilizing philosophical methodology and philosophical constructs.

B. SEPARATE SUBSTANCES, REVISITED : THE PRESENT SITUATION*

It is common knowledge that in the Soviet Union there are periodic, cyclical processes of "downgrading" and "upgrading". For example, during the Kruschshev era, "de-Stalinization" was the motto in communist politics. But now Stalin has been restored to some repute, and the downgrading process has been applied to Kruschshev himself.

It would seem that much the same process has taken place in contemporary Thomistic philosophy with regard to the angels, or ''separate substances". In pre-"technopolis" days, they seemed to enjoy some preeminence (perhaps because of a closer relationship which existed then between philosophy and theology). But now – probably without any conscious motivation – they seem to have been downgraded, perhaps because of the general orientation in philosophy at present to manifest its essential independence from theology.

If a philosophy claims to be an independent scientific discipline, it is almost inevitable that it should have difficulty making a place for entities like angels – for the simple reason that the "rational proofs" for the existence of angels are much more inconclusive than those for the existence of God. (One might say, it is hard enough to substantiate the existence of God : why try to add needless burdens to the metaphysician's inglorious tasks?).

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If we take a glance at the various proofs offered by St. Thomas for the existence of angels, we can see why the maintenance of a *"philosophical"* angelology might be something on the order of a contradiction in terms, in the light of our present knowledge :

For one thing, the Aristotelian proof in terms of the necessity of multiple "unmoved movers" or separate substances to account for the complexities of motion in the universe – is no longer acceptable. Aristotle's proof [1] seems to be inextricably bound up with his hypothesis about the constitution of the universe from various independent "packets of motion" ascending in concentric spheres from the earth to the edges of the universe. When this hypothesis was discarded, the conclusions from the hypothesis shared the same fate.

Then again, the various proofs that St. Thomas develops, with the help of various Aristotelian principles, – even though they do not rely, like the former proof, on an hypothesis of physical science – are quite inconclusive. Most of the proofs are *persuasiones* about the possibility of the existence of various genera of forms, separate from matter. Thus, for example, the fact that material forms are ' 'hemmed in" by the limitations of matter, and obscured by the congenital opacity of matter – leads us to expect that there must be some forms in the universe as a whole which are completely free from such imperfections [2]. Likewise, the limited scope and temporal transitions of man's "possible" intellect would lead us to conceive the possibility of certain intellects capable of seeing all things simultaneously in their interrelationship [3]. And the very imperfection of man's intellectual soul points to the existence of some species of pure intelligence, free from the limitations of bodily existence [4].

– With regard to such lines of reasoning, we might observe that, if it is difficult to make the leap in Anselm's "ontological" argument from the ideal existence of God to His real existence, and if it is difficult to make Kierkegaard's "leap of faith" – it is even more difficult to make the intellectual leap that St. Thomas is calling for here. One contemplating the frustrations accruing to physical forms might wish that there were some state of "free" forms, but there is no necessary relationship between wish and fact; and "proofs" in the strict sense are concerned with necessary relationships.

[1] See *De substantiis separatis*, Lescoe ed. (Connecticut: St. Joseph's College, 1962), pp. 43-50.

[2] *De substantiis separatis*, Ch. VII, 35, 36.

[3] *Summa theologiae*, I, Q. 51, a 1, c.

[4] *De spiritualibus creaturis*, V, sed contra.

With regard to St. Thomas' arguments based on the existence of praeternatural phenomena – unfortunately (or perhaps, fortunately) such phenomena are extremely scarce in our day. Professional parapsychologists who are attempting to establish the existence or non-existence of non-physical entities, on the basis of such phenomena, find themselves hindered by a dearth of publicly accessible data.

We would have to conclude, then (if we are unwilling to allow Scriptural evidence in our rational assessment of the case of the angels) that there is no substantial proof for the existence of angels. Does this mean that, from the vantage point of reason, angels do not exist? "Not exist" is a loaded predicate (or copula, if you prefer). For one thing, there are multiple senses of "existence" – so that existence will mean now a physical object, now a mere idea (for example, "the number 2"), now an ontological ground or principle [5]. For another, the various schools of philosophy are characteristically oriented to existence in some determinate sense [6].

Finally, even if we could get beyond the multiplicity of philosophical predispositions with regard to the question of existence, and the equivocity of connotations of the term, "existence" – it would still seem to be impossible to prove the absolute non-existence of anything [7]. For at the most, our statements about non-existence are reducible to assertions that we haven't yet observed, discovered, or uncovered this or that instance of existence. It would be absurd for a limited mind to maintain that, "in the world as a whole, x absolutely does not exist" (unless "x" were self-contradictory, and hence meaningless).

So the question of the existence of the angels is not completely closed.

But we come now to a corollary question : Do assertions of existence have any necessary logical priority over predicative assertions? In other words, do we necessarily have to establish the fact that "x exists" before we can establish the fact that x has the property F or G? If this were so, it would seem that any discussion of the *significance* of the angels would be impossible (how can we show that something is significant, if we can't show that it

[5] For example, the notion of a first cause – which does not seem to fall into the category of either a) a mere idea (since it is supposed to be the ground of *reality*) or b) a physical object.

[6] For example, the positivists will commonly delimit existence to the existence of physical objects; the Kantian will be willing to admit existence only where there is a synthesis of *a priori* category with the sense manifold; and the existentialists are not concerned primarily with existence in either the positivist or the Kantian sense.

[7] Except, perhaps, an idea which was self-contradictory. But even this exists *as* a contradiction.

exists?). But perhaps, on the other hand, there are certain questions of existence whose solution must be posterior to (or simultaneous with the solution of questions of essence. If, for example, Anselm's "ontological" proof is valid, the rationale of its validity would seem to be : work out the problem of essence, and existence may follow.

But even Anselm had to start with some presupposition of existence : namely, the existence of concepts. And so also, in order to proceed further in this discussion, we have to presuppose that angels exist in at least one sense – namely, as ideas. Some would take exception to this, on the grounds that there can be (exist) no ideas not corresponding to physical existents, or aspects of physical existents. But since the proof of *this* epistemological proposition would be at least as difficult to produce as any proof for the existence of angels – I feel justified, although not smugly justified, in assuming that angels exist *at least* as ideas.

With this assumption clarified, I will go on now to the question of the significance of angels (i.e., of the idea of angels). For purposes of clarity, I will treat of this question from three distinct points of view : 1) systematic Thomistic philosophy; 2) philosophical anthropology; and 3) the Christian faith, as revealed in the Scriptures.

1. From the point of view of Thomistic philosophy, a philosophy of the angels is of prime importance for throwing light on the "nature of contingent being" [8]. When we try to apply the categories of essence/existence, act/potency, substance/accident, etc. to the complexities of composite creatures, our discussion often becomes impeded because of the introduction of multiple contingent factors [9]. But if it is within our power to discuss the same categories in relationship to a state of "pure" creaturehood beyond space and time, we should be able to get more easily beyond obfuscating tangents to grapple with the problem of the truly *necessary* relationship between essence and existence, substance and accident, etc [10]..

[8] Collins, *Thomistic Philosophy of the Angels* (Wash., D.C.; Catholic University Press, 1947), Intro., p. xv.

[9] That is, factors which are contingent upon the fact of composite existence. For example, in regard to the question of the relation of essence to existence in a plant – there are inevitable sub-questions about the existence of the matter of the plant, the instant at which the essence became identifiable as a plant, the differentiation of proper or essential accidents from other accidents, as well as those borderline cases of plants which seem to manifest certain properties of animals.

[10] As a corollary to this, the examination of such a state of pure creaturehood may also help to "bring to a head" certain problematics arising from Thomistic presuppositions.

One example of this is an inconsistency that seems to develop with regard to St. Thomas'

2. From the point of view of philosophical anthropology it might be profitable for us to discuss the significance of the angels, in terms of their mythical content.

doctrine that a form could exist completely separate from matter, and that such immaterial existence would render that form *ipso facto* intelligible :

In the *S. Theol.*, I, Q. 107, a. 5, St. Thomas states that an angel cannot perceive the thoughts of another angel unless that angel chooses to reveal his thoughts. However, aside from the voluntary communication of thoughts through the will, each angel constantly carries about in its intellect intentional species, which represent all other angels in their "natural being" (*ibid.*, I, Q. 56, a, 2). In the *De substantiis separatis*, however, which remains St. Thomas' last major treatment of angelology, he goes on to note both a) that the natural being, or substance, of an angel is the receptacle for the angelic existence (*op. cit.*, Cap. VII, para. 42); and b) that, although this natural being is not a body, nevertheless it is something proportional to a body, *servatis servandis*. Therefore, as regards its intimate knowledge of others, an angel seems to be subject to certain restrictions quite reminiscent of those restrictions that human beings are subject to : For, just as human beings, aside from voluntary communications, can only have certain and reliable knowledge of the *bodies* of other human beings, and things which become manifest, sometimes involuntarily, in that phenomenal appearance – so also the angels can only have continual and certain knowledge of the "natural being" of other angels (the phenomenal appearance as contradistinguished from thoughts which can be kept secret within the inner sanctum of the existence of an angel). Therefore there seems to be a certain phenomenal aspect in an angel which acts like corporeality in man, providing a natural obstacle to becoming automatically and transparently intelligible to others.

On the other hand, in other places (e.g. *De Veritate*, Q. 8, a. 7) St. Thomas makes it quite clear that angels, being forms completely separate from matter, and not being received in, or possessed by, matter – are *ipso facto* self-possessing intellects, i.e. intelligible forms which are self- intelligizing. Since an individual angel is not hampered in the least by the opacity of matter, he is immediately transparent to himself. This conclusion seems to follow quite well from the basic premise that intelligence consists in the abstraction of intelligible forms from matter. But it is difficult to understand why we could not go one step further and conclude also that the angel completely transparent to himself would also be completely transparent to other angels who, like himself, suffer no impedance or opacity from matter.

The problem that emerges from these considerations is as follows : If the angels have a certain aspect which we might denominate their "natural being", as opposed to thought, this natural being, for all practical purposes amounts to a body. If it *does* amount to a body, it is extremely difficult to see how an individual angel can be automatically and completely transparent to himself. If it does *not* amount to a body, it is extremely difficult to see why that individual angel would not be automatically and completely transparent to his fellow angels, who are equally free from the opacity of matter. In either case, the doctrine as it stands, on the question of angelic self-knowledge and knowledge of others, seems to be inconsistent.

It should be noted here that, when we speak of the problem of the "natural being" or *existence* of thought in angels, we are introducing on a different level the same problem that inspired Anselm's so-called "ontological" argument and Descartes' *cogito*. But St. Thomas' relegation of the problem to a different level does not seem to render its solution the least bit less difficult.

For the purposes of this discussion, I would like to utilize Tucker's definition of myth as "the perception of something which is by nature interior, as if it were exterior and real, and a matter of empirical fact".[11].

The relation between exterior representation and interior truth is sometimes made explicit from the beginning, as in Plato's famous Analogy of the Cave, in the *Republic*. But very often the relation is not, and cannot easily be, made explicit. I am referring to myths which are considered to be realities within the context of a certain culture, and must be dislodged as realities (i.e. rendered explicit as myths) by later generations [12]. Thus the process of "de-mythologization" might be more precisely characterized as a process of de-reifying, resulting in the explicitation of myth.

If we may prescind for the moment from revelation and faith, it would seem that the case of the angels has proceeded according to this latter pattern :

In the pre-Renaissance period, angels (or some species of superhuman incorporeal being) were taken to be realities, even in non-Christian cultures. Now the average educated person would hesitate to speak of them as objective realities, on the same level as all other generally recognized realities. In other words, they have taken on the aspect of myth.

Myths must be made explicit, however; and the process of explicitation is twofold : It begins with the discovery that a certain assumption is purely subjective – something without any provable objective referents. Those who arrest the process at this point are prone to look upon all myths as merely interesting psychological phenomena, or even in a negative light, as "superstitions". But they fail to proceed to the second stage of explicitation, which consists of elucidating the nature of those subjective or internal truths which were thought of in terms of exteriorized symbols. This latter

[11] This is the definition that Tucker offers in defending his thesis that the concepts of Marxism were myths resulting from the inner alienations which Karl Marx perceived in his own existence, and tried to rationalize in external form. See *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge : University Press, 1961), Ch. XV.

[12] Rather clear-cut examples of this would be the mythologies and folklore of various pre-Christian cultures. Less clear-cut would be Aristotle's theory of the Prime Mover and Plato's Theory of Forms. These two theories are often simply taken as false or fictitious. But Aristotle's theory might be taken as a mythical representation of the fact that there must be some prime predicate – namely, existence – which is not the finite attribute of any subject (see my unpublished doctoral dissertation, "*The Self-Reflection of Consciousness in Hegel's Phenomenology*", Duquesne University, 1968; Conclusion, II. A. 1). And Plato's Theory of Forms might easily be taken as a mythical representation of the kinds of, and interrelationships between, ideas in our mind (the whole complexus of which was too close to Plato to be perceived directly and objectively).

process, in contrast to the former, is very gradual, and perhaps never finalized; and often invites an indefinite variety of interpretations.

If we apply this latter process to angelology, and specifically to the Thomistic version of angelology, we can discern a threefold "significance" for the angels in terms of their subjective relevance : a) insofar as they seem to concretize the essential projected ideal of human existence; b) insofar as the angelic hierarchies give us an external reflection or projection of a hierarchy of spiritual values; and c) insofar as the relationship of act to potency in the context of the interaction of the various "choirs" of angels, gives us a clue as to the possible meaning of "equality" in political society.

I will examine each of these aspects in some detail :

a. The angel as a projected human ideal

There seems to be a basic human need to project some ideal form of one's own potential or future state. In psychological terms, this need would be exemplified by the "ego-ideal" (super-ego) of Freud, the "Self" (C.G. Jung), or the "level of aspiration" (behavorial psychology). The rationale of such a need seems to be related to the fact that a conscious being cannot deal directly and introspectively with his own unactualized potentialities (which are, of their very nature, unconscious). He can deal with them only indirectly, through the projection of his highest potentialities – the super-ego, etc. This projection may represent either a realistic or an unrealistic assessment of the aforesaid potentialities; and it becomes, correspondingly, healthy or unhealthy in a psychological sense. But whether or not the projection is healthy, the projection process continues on beyond the purely subjective sphere. The individual seeks out possible "carriers" for the projected ideal. And this search leads him to become attracted deferentially or respectfully to certain concrete human authorities (including parents, peer leaders, religious and political figures); to abstractions (such as law, morality, and the State); and to "transcendent" beings (such as God and angels) [13].

[13] One could analyze this same process without recourse to the presupposition of an "unconscious". One instance of such an analysis would be Kant's description of the Ideal of humanity in pp. 485-487 in the *Critique of Pure Reason*; (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1965). The "Ideal" in Kant's sense, is the extension of certain positive human attributes to a comprehensive determinate and individualized totality (a human "Ideal") who is in conformity with the general ends of humanity. As an example of such an Ideal, Kant mentions the "Wise Man" that the Stoics referred to. The Ideal of the "Wise man"

If we may take the angels as instances of the functioning of this idealization process, their "significance" becomes manifest : Man presupposes that he has some purely immaterial facet of his own nature which is capable of supreme perfection, but perhaps will only be completely perfected in an afterlife. He correspondingly projects an ideal of supreme consciousness separate from matter, and separate from time. And the "angels" – whether they be considered as mythical figures or transcendent entities – become the quasi-objective "carriers" of this projection – giving it fuller definition, and perhaps even making it more realizable [14].

b. The angelic hierarchies as a mythical representation of a hierarchy of values

In elaborating on the various genera of angelic perfection (i.e., the "hierarchies" and "choirs"), St.Thomas looks to Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite as the final authority. Therefore, if any representation of values is connoted in and through the hierarchies, no one should be surprised if these values are Neo-Platonic in their general orientation. In other words, the values represented will be Neo-Platonic portrayals of values imbedded in Western Christian culture.

With this in mind, it is easy to discern possibilities for relevance of the three "hierarchies" and the nine "choirs" of angels : For example, if we consider the differentiated functions of the three choirs in each hierarchy, we see that, in general, the first hierarchy is concerned with contemplation the second with the application of the fruits of contemplation to the world, through "universal causality"; while the lowest hierarchy is concerned in a special way with the direct administration of creatures in the world [15]. This arrangement seems to be based on the implicit assumption that – with regard to the relative value of operations possible to an intellective creature – the "contemplative" life is highest, and the "active" life the lowest, while a combination of the two types of life holds the middle place [16].

is conceived *a priori* in the mind of the Stoic; and then may or may not be found to be existentially exemplified in this or that particular individual.

In his *Critique of Judgement* (New York : Hafner, 1951), pp. 68-73, Kant shows how this Ideal functions similarly in the aesthetic sphere.

The coincidence of Kant's explanation with an explanation which presupposes an "unconscious" – lies in this : that both explanations assume a subjective need to formulate, and become related to, various epitomes of human perfection, i.e. personal ideals.

[14] If, however, there is no possibility of a perdurance of human consciousness separate from matter, the quasi-ideal, "angel", would seem to be an unhealthy ideal.

[15] See *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 108, a. 6, c.

[16] St. Thomas seems to uphold this hierarchy of values in the Summa, II-IIæ, q. 182,

One further example : The three choirs of the first and highest hierarchy are described in descending order as follows : First, the seraphim, preeminent for love, and closest to God; next, the cherubim, preeminent for knowledge; finally, the thrones, exerting primary jurisdiction over the middle hierarchy, consisting of dominations, virtues, and powers – all of whom are concerned with the universal governance of creation [17]. It would take no extraordinary powers of deduction to see that there is implied here a scale of values which places love at the top, knowledge next, and power in the last place [18].

One might raise the question : why represent values in a mythical and symbolic fashion, rather than explicitly and conceptually? This question seems to presuppose that man, by introspection, can directly discover and disclose the scale of values which functions as the primary motivational source for his actions. But history, and our own experience, seem to deny the possibility of doing this with any facility and clarity. And if an individual (or a society) in our day wished to determine the values which *de facto* predominate in him (or it) – perhaps the surest way to accomplish this would be to analyze the myths and symbols which exerted the greatest influence on that individual or that society (provided that these myths or symbols could themselves be recognized for what they are).

c. The interaction of the angelic hierarchies as a model for human equality

St. Thomas states in one place [19] that the inferior angels have more potency and less act, while the superior angels have more act and less potency. From the context, it may be seen that the "potency" that is referred to here is potency in a negative or privative sense (not potency as a positive ordering-

a. 1, where he considers the relative perfection of active vs. contemplative life. But later, he seems to suffer a conflict and vacillation in this value system, when he comes to consider the question of the relative perfection of his own Dominican order, which was devoted to a combination of the active and contemplative life (see *ibid.*, II-IIæ:, q. 188, a. 6. c). If the Dominican order was really the highest type of life because of this combination of contemplation and action, it would be hard to see why the "middle" hierarchy of angels would not be the highest, for the same reasons. But then again, the values characterized by the hierarchies are only mythical, implicit values, which may easily come into conflict with values explicitly espoused by an individual or a society.

[17] See *ibid.*, II-IIæ, q. 108, a. 7, c.

[18] This is a typically neo-Platonic axiology, and may be expected to encounter difficulties in those places where St. Thomas has to make a choice between the Aristotelian preference for the intellect and the Platonic emphasis on the intelligible Good (the proper object of *dilectio*, i.e. love which is rooted in the will). See, for example, I-IIæ, q. 13, where the question of the relative superiority of intellect vs. will comes to a head.

[19] *De ente et essentia*, Ch. IV.

to-act, as is frequently the case in Thomistic terminology [20]). Thus the lower angels, because of the relative multiplicity of their privations, would certainly be unequal to the superior angels, with respect to natural endowments. But with respect to their existential situation (i.e. the actual possession of illumination and grace), a certain equality obtains amid the hierarchies. Or perhaps "equalization" would be a better term than "equality". For the superior angels are constantly (aeviternally) sharing their insights and graces with the lower orders; and these latter are thus continually participating vicariously in that which they do not have natural access to. And so, in the actual economy of their spiritual interactions, there would be no inequality among the angels; since any actuation that is capable of being shared becomes "common property", automatically.

Since the time of the Renaissance, "equality" has functioned as a rather embarrassing ideal in Western society. All around us we see inevitable, irradicable inequalities in natural endowments, which would certainly remain even in a "classless" utopia. If we interpret equality as "equality of opportunity", we still do not resolve the discrepancy. For the range of opportunities of the powerful or talented man is relatively greater than that of others; and even if every individual had open to him opportunities proportional to his capacities – the only "equality" here would be an equal *proportionality* of opportunity as compared with capacities. But *people* would still not be equal; and certain segments of the population – e.g. the crippled, the insane, the very young and very old – would often be out of the reckoning altogether. So "equality" seems to be a rather mythical value.

We are not willing to give it up, however. And perhaps this unwillingness is not irrational. For if we take equality to mean some attainable future state of "equalization", in which there will be a voluntary communal sharing of everything that is not inalienable – the myth takes on meaning (that is, the myth is not "just" a myth). And in this context, the Thomistic theory of the reciprocity and interactions amid the angelic hierarchies would be a projection of such a future state in such a way that it appears as a *fait accompli* in some ideal sphere of life which confronts our life as an archetype or model of social equality.

[20] See p. 44, *infra*.

3. From the vantage point of faith, it would seem that the doctrine of the angels is significant insofar as it gives determination to the "empty" idea of God.

The idea of God, according to St. Thomas [21] is a completely negative

[21] *Summa,* I, q. 12, a. 12, and q. 84, a. 7, ad. 3.

[21] Cf. e.g. *De ver.,* II, 1, ad. 9; and *S. Th.,* I, q. 12, a. 12, and q. 84, a. 7, ad. 3. The notion that our idea of God is negative derives in large part from certain writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, especially the *De divinis nominibus* and the *De mystica theologia.* Perhaps the clearest statement of the negative nature of our cognition of God is to be found in *De mystica theologia,* I, 2 (P.G. 3, 1000-1001), where Dionysius says : "*δέον ἐπ' αὐτῇ καὶ πάσας τὰς τῶν ὄντων τιθέναι καὶ καταφάσκειν θέσεις, ὡς πάντων αἰτίᾳ, καὶ πάσὰς ἀὐτας κυριώτερον ἀποφάσκειν, ὡς ὑπερ παντα ὑπερούσῃ, καὶ μὴ οἰέσθαι τὰς ἀποφάσεις ἄντικειμένας εἶναι ταῖς καταφάσεσιν, ἀλλα πολὺ πρότερον αὐτὴν ὑπὲρ τὰς στερήσεις εἶναι τὴν ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν καὶ ἀφαίρεσιν καὶ θέσιν*". ("It is necessary, in regard to [God as the cause of all things], (1) to refer all the positive attributes of beings to Him, and to affirm these attributes of Him; but then, (2) with even more resolution, to deny all these attributes of Him, insofar as He exists beyond them all. But [finally it should be observed that] (3) the 'affirmations' in this case should not be considered to be *contrary to* the 'negations' since God is altogether beyond all such limitations – the affirmations as well as the negations".

As we can see from this text, our knowledge of God does not simply involve negation (the negation of positing finite attributes), but, in a more complete sense, the negation of negation (the denial that our limited ideas (denials as well as affirmations) contribute anything to the knowledge of God. Therefore to say that in Dionysius' formulation our knowledge of God is "completely negative", is to say that the third and final stage of this knowledge is, in a certain sense, a double negation. Does it mean that this "third way" (the *via supereminentiae*) is an affirmation? It would seem not. The negation of a negation may amount to an affirmation in logic or mathematics, but not necessarily in natural theology. At least Dionysius does not give us much ground for optimism about having any positive knowledge of God.

How far does St. Thomas follow Dionysius on this point? This is open to some dispute.

According to Klubertanz (*St. Thomas Aquinas on Analogy*; Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1960), St. Thomas parts ways with the strict Dionysian methodology, which leads to agnosticism : As Klubertanz puts it, "St. Thomas is not a Dionysian, not an agnostic. (For) he serenely asserts that we can know that God exists, that He is good, wise, holy, loving ...". (*Op. cit.,* p. 151). St. Thomas' point of departure from Dionysius is to be found, according to Klubertanz, in his doctrine on analogy. Although St Thomas abandoned the contention that we could attribute perfections to God by an analogy of proper proportionality (*op. cit.,* p. 94), he did not abandon the doctrine of analogy altogether. And it is quite clear from his later writings that he admits of a knowledge of God according to "the analogy of causal participation". (*Ibid.,* p. 135). In terms of this analogical method of predication, we can say that " 'God is good' means that God, who simply is, by being is the fullness of all that belongs to Him. In saying that God is good we do not and cannot mean that we know in what His goodness consists. Indeed, it is more accurate to say that His goodness does not consist in some mode or character of His activity or being – it is His being, simply. ... This is proportional predication ..." (*ibid.,* pp. 153-154).

One important question, of course, is whether such analogical predication contributes anything at all to our knowledge of God. If it does not, then it is difficult to see why St. Thomas is any less of an "agnostic" than Dionysius.

Gilson, in *Le Thomisme* (Paris : J. Vrin, 1965), raises doubts about the cognitive value of the analogical predication of divine attributes. According to Gilson, analogical knowledge of God simply means that we do not have to speak of God "*altogether equivocally*" – e.g. in the way that we apply the term "dog" to the animal and to the constellation with that name. And the fact that rescues us from such equivocity is the cause-effect relationship that exists between God and creatures (cf. *op. cit.*, p. 123). But we have no reason for concluding that, by the utilization of analogy, we can attain to at least some knowledge – an imperfect knowledge – about God. For, as Gilson says, "Faire dire par Saint Thomas que nous avons une connaissance au moins imparfaite de ce que Dieu est, c'est donc trahir sa pensée telle qu'il l'a expressément formulée à mainte reprise ... A toute interprétation contraire de saint Thomas, le texte justement fameux de la *Somme contre Gentils* oppose un obstacle infranchissable : 'Non ... de Deo capere possumus quid est, sed quid non est, et qualiter alia se habeant ad ipsum...' ". (*Ibid.*, p. 126). Therefore (Gilson concludes) when we make analogical predications – saying that God is good, just, intelligent, and so on – we are simply affirming, in each case, the divine substance (*ibid.*, p. 127). But such predications do not increase or clarify our knowledge of God beyond the fact of His existence – which, presumably, we already know.

Can we have "analogical" knowledge of God? In order to respond to this question, one might make an analogy to Kant's third antinomy (Cf. *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, A 444, 445, B 472, 473).

In this third antinomy, we vacillate between two opposite conclusions in regard to freedom : For a) if every event has a cause, then there must be some first uncaused (spontaneous, free) cause to get the whole series of causes started; but b) since this first cause is, by definition, uncaused, it must be completely outside the series of events which are caused, and unable to "effect" this series, at least in the usual sense of the word, "effect".

So also, with regard to the doctrine of analogy, we might observe that a) since we always obtain some knowledge of a cause through its effects, we must be able to know something of God – however little – through contemplation of his effects; but b) since God is outside the series of events which have causes, we cannot say that we gain knowledge of the First Cause through effects, in the same way that we gain knowledge of other causes through their effects.

Many criticisms have been directed towards Kant's reasoning in this antinomy. But, in defense of Kant, we might say that he does throw light on an ineradicable human tendency to make a leap from "cause" in the usual sense (an event beginning to operate at some point of time, and thus preceded by some anterior event) to the idea of a "free" cause (a completely unconditioned cause, completely outside the temporal series of events).

Likewise (with regard to analogical predication of attributes of God) we could observe that there seems to be an ineradicable human tendency to suppose that – since our experience of effects gives us some indirect knowledge of the respective cause – this experience should give us at least some knowledge (though very indirect and remote) of the first uncaused cause, which is, by definition completely outside the concatenations of cause-and-effect, and not *causally* connected with it.

Therefore a kind of "antinomy" results with regard to the question of the knowledge of God through effects : One can, according to the analogy of causal proportionality, say that God is "good", "existent", etc. because effects like goodness and existence must

idea. We arrive at it by referring all of creation to a supreme Cause, and then denying (through a process of *remotio*) that this Cause is anything like its effects. Through this process of negation we arrive at the notion of a "supereminent" Being. We do not have, however, the slightest positive rational comprehension of what this supereminent Being *is*. Even when we predicate certain attributes of God – such as justice, mercy, goodness, omnipotence, etc. – these attributes tell us nothing about the positive attributes of God.

All in all, it is probably a good thing if we cannot fill in the idea of God with such abstract attributes. For, insofar as they are abstract, they are "dead", in the same sense that Platonic Forms, completely outside the compass of the real physical world, would be dead. It is quite possible, of course, that men may find spiritual edification in thinking of God in terms of such attributes. But still, one must eventually recognize the limitations of all such "created" determinations, if he wishes to approximate to a more adequate and positive cognition of God as He is in Himself.

In this connection, it is interesting to conjecture what sort of positive determinations could accrue to a truly "living" God. It seems to be the law of all life (thinkers as diverse as Hegel and Teilhard de Chardin have noted this) that higher unities are concomitant to proportionally higher internal differentiation. If this law obtains at all in the case of God, and if God is in any sense a living unity, there should also be some concomitant diversity, perhaps even in addition to the Trinity of Persons.

We can't really raise the question of "organs" of "faculties" in the case of God. But if there were anything corresponding to organic differentiation in God, and if we were searching for some adequate representation of this organic differentiation, perhaps the closest representation available to us might be what we call the "angel". If this is so, the frequent equation

be traced back to some uncaused cause. Or one might, like Dionysius, prefer to say that God is non-existent and not-good, in the sense that He is completely outside the realm of existence and nothingness, of goodness and badness.

It is very difficult to apply either pole of this antinomy to St. Thomas, since there are many texts where he seems to indicate that we can have an indirect (analogical) knowledge of God through His effects (cf. e.g. *Summa contra gentiles*, II, 98; *In I Sententiae*, d. 8, q. 1, a. 2; *Quodlibeta* II, q. 2, a. 3); but other texts in which he seems to accept the strict Dionysian position (e.g. *Summa contra gentiles* I, 30, ad. fin.; *De potentia*, VII, 5, ad 2; *De veritate*, q. 2, art. 1, ad. 9).

A resolution of this "antinomy" may be found in simply recognizing that knowing "only what God is *not*" (the Dionysian position) is *a kind of knowledge* of God (analogical knowledge).

of "angel" with "God" in Scripture [22] would not necessarily be an instance of the unsophisticated confusion of two distinct ideas. Rather, it could be construed as a symbolic representation calculated to give us a much better picture of God than attributes like "omnipotence", "omniscience", justice, providence, etc. – which are simply abstractions of various isolated human attributes used to give determinate content to the rather empty rational concept, "God".

The reader will recall that I mentioned earlier my assumption that angels existed "at least" as ideas. I did not intend by this assumption to imply that "mere" ideas are in any way inferior in reality to physical objects. However, as Carl Jung has aptly observed [23] there seems to be an unprovable presupposition in Western society that physical objects are somehow more "real" than purely mental objects. It was in deference to this almost universal presupposition (which I find operative even in my own thinking) that I delimited the existence of angels to purely mental existence, for the purposes of this discussion. But it is impossible to conceive of physical objects completely outside the ambit of ideas; and I might, with good reason, hold to the opposite (and equally unprovable) presupposition that ideas are more "real" than things. If this latter view could command assent, the case of the "existence" of angels would take on an altogether new light. For the difficulty that people face in assenting to the existence of angels, stems from the fact that, while granting qualified existence to mere ideas, they generally relegate existence in the full and proper sense to physical objects which exemplify a synthesis of sense qualities and ideas (as Kant so well observed). If this situation could be reversed, and men could assent to the proposition that at least *some* ideas might be more real than things – then the preceding arguments concerning the significance of the idea of angels might amount to a proof for the existence of angels (provided that angels could be demonstrated to be a member of some class of ideas which is more real than physical objects) [24].

[22] Since I am prescinding here from the question of the "real" existence of the angels, the problem of pantheism should not arise. However, even if angels were more than mental representations, and did indeed constitute the "organic differentiation" of God – there would still be no identification of God and angel. Thus this would not be pantheism any more than the statement that the soul pervades every part of the body would imply that each part of the body was identical with the soul.

[23] Cf. e.g. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (N.Y. : Harvest, 1962), pp. 190f.

[24] Examples of such classes of ideas might be : ideas which serve to clarify the nature of physical and/or mental reality; personal ideals of perfection; ideas which bridge the gap between faith and reason. However, there are also certain "ideas" which would not

seem, strictly speaking, to fit into the class of ideas, such as the "idea" of a First Cause of physical and mental reality; or the "idea" of the distinction of thought from being. Such "ideas", since they are *prius natura* to the separation of physical *from* mental reality, could only inappropriately be termed ideas, or mental realities. Thus they are ideas of a paradoxical sort – close in meaning to what Hegel called the concrete Idea (which is often misunderstood as a purely mental scaffolding for sense phenomena). If angels were "ideas" of this sort, they would have to be relegated to some class other than physical or mental existents.

I.

INTRODUCTION

The great gap which exists between the natures of corporeal creatures and the purely spiritual nature of God, has been handled by various philosophers in differing ways :

Some seem to have ignored this gap altogether. Anaxagoras, for instance, ascribed to his supreme Mind the power of immediately and independently ordering the whole universe. Descartes' supremely veracious God seems to immediately illuminate all rational creatures. Hegel's Absolute Spirit would seem to cause all the motions and fluctuations of evolving Nature purely by its own internal dialectic.

In thus ignoring the gap between God and His material creation, such thinkers have indeed served to accentuate the primal efficacy of the Supreme Being. But at the same time they seem to have unduly heightened the mystery surrounding – not the *fact* – but the *mode*, of God's efficacy in the world.

Others, such as the Epicureans, bridged the aforesaid gap with choirs of supreme corporeal gods, which in some mysterious way managed to have the "best of both worlds" – by combining immortality with unlimited corporeal pleasure.

Still others, as Plato and Aristotle, have deemed it irrational to say that the "Highest God" acted immediately upon creatures. They have supposed it beneath the dignity of this God to engage in the disposition of corporeal things, and even of the most prosaic mundane affairs. They have, accordingly posited an intermediate type of creature : a spiritual creature, immobile and fully actual; and yet somehow participating in, dependent on, the eternal stability and immeasurable bounty of the Highest God for their own quasi-divine natures.

Thomas Aquinas, in describing the order of the created universe, adopts the opinion of these latter philosophers, in bridging the gap between God and man. He posits the need for "separate substances", i.e., substances which, unlike man, are completely separate from matter, not dependent

on it even *per accidens*, i.e., in order to supply external objects and stimuli for thought. He ascribes to them a definite mission. a pre-eminent efficacy, a complexus of powers, in the ordering and execution of Divine Providence in the world.

In reiterating the doctrine of these philosophers, he tries to let reason speak for itself, defend itself. He checks the opinions of Plato and Aristotle for internal self-consistency; he also checks them against one another, noting where they agree, where disagree, and giving sometimes a final, sometimes a tentative, adjudication in moot matters. He brings in the opinions of the Commentators; often points out doctrines which are implicit in Plato and Aristotle, but incompletely elaborated by them. The truths of faith and the teachings of the Holy Scriptures are utilized, sometimes as a "negative rule" [1], sometimes as the "final word" [2] in the rendering of an adjudication.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the entitative and operative powers of separate substances, as described and defined by Thomas Aquinas in his major philosophical and theological works. A brief consideration will also be given to the means of investigation which are available to us in the study of such powers; and also to the hierarchical disposition of angels on the basis of these powers.

To better define the scope and limits of our discussion of the potencies of separate substances, we will devote an introductory chapter to an examination of the Thomistic doctrine on potency.

[1] Cf. for instance Ch. 1 of the *De Substantiis Sep.* (init.), where St. Thomas states that in the work to follow, he will proceed to reject all ideas which do not "ring true" to the Catholic Faith.

[2] Cf. e.g. the *Summa*, I, Q. 46, Art. 2, c., where he states that the creation *in time* of the world, though indemonstrable by reason, must be accepted by faith.

II.

THE THOMISTIC DOCTRINE ON POTENCY

A Synthetic Presentation in Terms of "Active" and "Passive"*

In St.Thomas' formulation, the study of potency is one of the most important prerequisites to a study of being. And the reason for this is that the only being we have immediate experience of, is created being; and created being is necessarily *potential* being – i.e., in some way falling short of complete perfection, and of perfect actuality. To understand potency, therefore, is to understand the proper characteristic of created being. Even the "potency" of God is essentially related to our understanding of the potency of created being. God is "potential", i.e., the omnipotent creator, *quoad nos*, only because we are potential in respect to Him, i.e., created by Him. We are moved to posit the power and superiority of God as creator, precisely because we perceive the contingent and dependent powers and capacities of creatures [1]. And so potency in God is neither an imperfection nor a limit, but rather the unlimited creative power of God's essence, i.e., its perfect actuality.

We arrive at the concept of the "potency" of God through abstraction from the potencies of creatures. Indeed, we could know neither God nor His potency, unless we examined created beings and their potencies as a preliminary. And it follows from this that the "potency" in God is not predicated of Him as if in contradistinction to actuality; but only by way of eminence – i.e., insofar as He contains in a pre-eminent way all created (potential) perfections and potencies. God's potency, therefore, is a paradox : It is fully *actual* potency; and is, indeed, identical with His fully actual essence [2]. In creatures, on the other hand, it is truly a "potential" potency.

* Published in *Divus Thomas*, fasc. III, 1970.

[1] Cf. *I De Pot.*., Q. I, Art. 1.

[2] Cf. *Ibid.*

In view of the importance of potency *in via inventionis* for the understanding of both created and uncreated being, we might say that the most important division of being is the division into actual and potential being. For this division truly and radically sets off created from uncreated being. And it is only by the creation of complex *being* (i.e., being composed from potency and act) that *beings* have become multiplied, and hence divided. All the divisions and distinctions which we ascribe to being would be neither possible nor intelligible unless there were some primordial complexification of being.

Let us conduct our inquiry into St.Thomas' general doctrine on potency, by first highlighting the distinction between actual and potential being, and then considering potency in its role as a principle of being :

A. THE DISTINCTION OF ACTUAL FROM POTENTIAL BEING

In the Aristotelian system, actual being, i.e., actual substance must be somehow prior in the universe considered as a whole [3]. St. Thomas agrees basically with this, but adds that God is substance by way of *eminence*. It would, indeed, be more accurate to say that God is a *supersubstance*, a hyperexistent, and that He contains the perfections of substantiality and *esse* in much the same way that man contains the perfections of plant life, i.e., in a pre-eminent way [4]. To more clearly define what he means by the fully actual God who created all things, St. Thomas quotes from Chapter XI, 6, of the *De Divinis Nominibus* of Dionysius :

> We cannot say that the *per se* existent who is the cause of all things is some *substance*, whether angelic or divine : but must rather aver that the principle and the substantial ground and the cause of all the things which have been created in nature – is itself a veritable *supersubstantial* existent [5].

St.Thomas, in commenting on this passage, concludes that this super-

[3] Cf. *Metaph.*, Bk. XII, Ch. 1 & 6 (1069a, 18-29; 1071b, 3-6).

[4] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVII, § 93, pp. 136-137. A problem of terminology enters in here. If we wish to attribute substantiality and existence to creatures, then we are constrained to say that God has something more than this. If, on the other hand, we say that *God* is being and substance, we must, to be consistent and philosophically exact, say that all creatures are only quasi-beings, quasi-substances (i.e., having such names only by way of analogy).

[5] Cf. *Ibid.*, "Non enim substantiam quamdam divinam aut angelicam esse dicimus per se esse quod est causa quod sint omnia; solum enim – quod sint ex natura omnia – ipsum esse supersubstantiale ... est principium et substantia et causa".

substantial *esse* of God is *substance* only in the sense that it is as it were the exemplar or form of all other substantial forms.

It is perhaps even misleading for us to think of God as an essence or substance. For when we use such words we cannot help but visualize a receptable or receptive potency. And there is nothing of receptivity in God. He is, indeed, unreceived *esse*, unreceptive essence. He is pure and simple and completely impassible : the final act, or actuation, to which all created passive potencies are somehow ultimately ordered [6].

The created beings which are ordered to God in such ways have one thing in common : They are all *potential* in some way, in that, although they already participate in a higher or inferior manner in the perfections of God, they are still intrinsically *ordered* either to further perfection, or to continual preservation in the perfection which they have.

Those beings which participate in the highest way in the actuality of God are the intellective substances. These intellective substances are subdivisible into : 1) those numerous incorporeal species which in popular terminology we designate as "angels", and which are complete substances in full possession of both themselves and their thought; and 2) the species of man, whose soul is an incomplete substance which will attain to the full possession of itself and of its thought only if and when it comes to a state of full self-comprehension in an immortal body, unsusceptible to further change or corruption.

There are also other beings which participate in a minimal way in the supersubstantial actuality of God; which – in metaphysical terms – "have a long way to go" in attaining to such actuality; but which can indeed advance towards human intellective actuality according to slow and ordered progression [7]. And these are the essentially material beings : i.e., beings whose substance could not exist in any way without matter. The potentiality of such beings is a progression towards actuality, a progression which is never quite complete, but always moving, always becoming [8]. And the potency of such material beings is called "prime matter", i.e., that first substratum which must be presupposed as a receptacle for all essentially material forms, and also for the incomplete substantial form of man, which depends *per accidens* on a body for its complete perfection.

[6] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d 42, q. 1, a. 1.

[7] Cf. *In XII Metaph.*, Lect. II, p. 624, Parma : "Licet ... materia prima sit in potentia ad omnes formas, tamen quodam ordine suscipit eas. Per prius enim est in potentia ad formas elementares, et eis mediantibus secundum diversas proportiones commixtionum est in potentia ad diversas formas".

B. POTENCY AS A PRINCIPLE OF BEING

Potency, whether it be found in material or in spiritual beings, is essentially an *ordering* to act, a special finite mode of *participation* in the pure actuality of God. And, if we analyze the connotation of the word, "participation", we will see that it is at the same time both an affirmation and a negation : an affirmation, in so far as it designates a certain degree of positive actuality which is possessed; but a negation, in so far as it implies that there is some chasm – be it relatively great or small – between the perfection of the participant and unparticipated act.

There is an evident, easily perceptible negation or privation implied in the "participation" of act on the part of *generable* and *corruptible* things : for they all have some kind of a limited form or act, which is able to be replaced by some other form; and the very phenomenon of change implies a privation, a negation, of the new form which is to be received.

But there is also another, more metaphysical type of privation, and therefore of participation, to be found in these same generable and corruptible beings : a metaphysical participation, a pure type of potency, a fundamental transcendent relationship which is found in every created being, whether material or spiritual. As St. Thomas says, even in corporeal generation some deeper type of potency is necessary over and above matter :

> Over and above this transistory mode of becoming, it behoves us – if we are to follow the opinion of Aristotle and Plato – to designate another, more fundamental type ... That is to say, over and above that mode of becoming by which something is generated when a new form is united to the matter – we must presuppose another, more fundamental generation of things, according to which existence itself is infused to the whole universe of creatures from that primary being who is existent of His very nature [9].

This fundamental deprivation of existence *in itself*, which gives to a thing the metaphysical possibility for *receiving* existence *ab alio* – is called in Thomistic terminology, "essence". All existing creatures, in so far as they are created and participant, must have some a-temporal ground for receiving

[8] Cf. Arist., *Physics*, VIII, 5, 257b, 7-9 : "The potential is in process to actuality, and motion is an incomplete actuality of the movable ...".

[9] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. IX, § 48, p. 86 : "Ultra hunc modum fiendi necesse est secundum sententiam Platonis et Aristotelis ponere alium altiorem ... Oportet ... supra modum fiendi quo aliquid fit, forma materiae adveniente, praeintelligere aliam rerum originem, secundum quod esse attribuitur toti universitati rerum a primo ente quod est suum esse".

existence – a ground which becomes at the same time a mode of expressing existence. And "essence" supplies such a ground.

The essence, indeed, gives complete metaphysical shape, and possibility of existence, to a thing. And nothing would be able to exist, unless it had the intrinsic form of transcendent potentiality which its essence gives it. However, we must not make the mistake of supposing that essence actually causes the existence of something, instead of vice versa. Essence has no causal relationship to the existence it "receives", except a purely material one. In fact, as St. Thomas notes in the *De Ente et Essentia* [10], we can easily think of some essence without knowing anything about whether one actually exists, or not. This is because of our human, analytic habit of breaking things up into their intelligible parts, and then starting from the bottom, so to speak, in the didactical reconstructions which we make of reality. But our reconstructions will never represent actual things *in rerum natura*, unless there is a final mental addition of the *actus ultimus*, the form of forms and act of all acts, i.e., the act of existence itself, or *esse*.

In a composite essence, the matter is not existentially actuated by the form, except on condition that the form is itself made real and actual by the *actus essendi*. A similar relationship to the *actus essendi* is found in the case of angels, who, though they may be said to "be" their own *form* [11], yet cannot be said to be their own existence. As St. Thomas states in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*,

> We find in the angels a composition, in that their existence is not identical with their quiddity (quod est) ... We have already shown that God is His own subsistent existence. Nothing, therefore, besides God, can be its own existence; it follows, consequently, that in every created substance, the substance is one thing,while the existence of the substance is quite another [12].

However, in the angels, as well as in the most inferior material substance, the *actus essendi* is not self-sufficient; but must, for its explanation and very possibility, presuppose some type of "pure" potency, some "material" for the reception of the act.

And so we see that "potency" in its most abstract and essential sense is the material principle which makes finite existence itself possible. We shall

[10] *De Ente et Essentia*, Ch. IV.

[11] *De Ente*, Ch. IV.

[12] *S.C.G.*, II, 52 : "Invenitur in eis aliqua compositio, ex eo quod non est idem in eis esse et quod est ... Ostensum est quod Deus est suum esse subsistens. Nihil igitur aliud praeter Ipsum potest esse suum esse; oportet igitur in omni substantia quae est praeter Ipsum, aliud esse ipsam substantiam et aliud ejus esse".

see in the following section how it also corresponds in a derivative sense to other acts, or perfections, or aspects of perfections – than the *actus essendi* itself.

C. THE PRIMORDIAL TYPES OF POTENCY-ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

St. Thomas, in the beginning of his *De Potentia Dei*, differentiates for us the two fundamental divisions of potency :

> There is a twofold division of potency : 1) active potency, which is the principle of that act which is called "operation"; and 2) passive potency, which is the principle of the first act, or form, of a thing [13].

St. Thomas goes on to say [14] that active potency is the cause of all the "actions", or operations, which are elicited from an individual existent: and that passive potency is the cause of all the passivities and "passions" in a thing. He remarks that our notion of "potency" is derived from a consideration of act, and that we start out *in via inventionis* in ascribing potency to the most overt operations, and finally end up in positing it as the purely passive principle of the most covert ''operation" – namely, of the form and substantial act of a thing (and thus this latter division of potency is truly, as we remarked above [15], potency in the most abstract and essential sense, potency *par excellence*).

An understanding of active and passive potency is of paramount importance for the whole of Thomistic ontology. The reason for this is that the relationship of active to passive potency within a particular being or between one being and another – serves to establish this or that individual being in its peculiar and proper analogical status, within the whole hierarchy of creation. And all the perfections of a particular being are proportionate to this ontological status within the realm of being.

Our next consideration, therefore, in this analysis of the general Thomistic formulation of the doctrine on potency, will be given to the precise scope and extent of these fundamental types of active and passive potency.

[13] *Loc. cit.*, 1, c : "Duplex est potentia : una activa cui respondet actus qui est operatio; alia est potentia passiva, cui respondet actus qui est forma".

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] P. 34, *supra*.

1. The scope and existential ramifications of "active potency"

The operations produced naturally by a being are called by St. Thomas the "act of that which is perfect", or the "act of a being in act". For example, the operation by which a separate substance applies its will to various intelligible species would be such an "act of a being in act" [16]. This terminology is meant to differentiate such operations from mere transient motion, which is properly called the "act of a being in potency", i.e., an act not flowing in the natural order from some state of actuality which a being already has, but infused into some "pure", i.e., completely passive, potency [17].

The potencies which correspond to such operations, i.e., the "potencies of beings in act", are the so-called "active powers" of beings. In created beings, these active powers are characterized as accidental perfections, in the second species of the accident of quality; ontological qualities which effectively bridge the gap between a substance and its own operation [18]. They must be attributed to all creatures, precisely because creatures are unable to act immediately through their substantial forms [19]. (In God, on the other hand, who is able to act immediately through His simple and eternally active essence, active "power" becomes existentially identical with substantial act).

While active potency in God is synonymous with the infusion of *esse* to all created potencies, and is, in its essence, a *fait accompli*, active potency in creatures is a means through which their perfection in accidental esse is accomplished – a principle discernible by the human mind in its efforts to accurately describe the process which must take place for the production of any concrete act [20]. We must presuppose some such principle within the individual, if we are to attribute a concrete action to an individual as to its source, i.e., its spontaneous initiator [21].

[16] *S.Th.*, I, Q. 59, Art. I, ad. 3.

[17] Cf. *In III Phys.*, Lect. III, *init.* It should be noted that, in Aristotle's formulation, the form (first act) of a substance is also such an "act of a being in potency", in that the generation of any substantial form is immediately reducible to the "primary" locomotion – i.e., the combination and separation of elemental particles (Cf. Phys., VIII, 7, 260a, 29-260b, 14).

[18] Cf. *De Pot.*, I, Q. I, Art. I.

[19] Cf. *Ibid.*, ad. 11.

[20] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 41, Art. 6, ad 1.

[21] *S.C.G.*, II, Ch. 60 : "Item. Sicut nihil ... .

The power of action within a creature would seem to be able to be best described as the ability of a thing to accomplish its natural or freely intended end with a minimum of hindrance or obstacles [22]. For example, a powerful fighter would be able to obtain more by brute strength than another person [23]. But this power of action is neither self-sufficient nor self-explanatory. It must have a root, a rational ground, in the substantial act, in the form, of the individual creature [24]. As with every accident, it must be rooted in, and caused by, the *substance* of a thing [25]. And in the case of an intellective creature, we would have to say that the root of all such powers is the incomplete substantiality of the soul as the active principle of the human essence [26] (or, in the case of separate substances, the materially unlimited and uncomposed substantiality of the separated form) [27].

The form and substantial perfection of a thing might, therefore, be called its first and fundamental "principle of operations". However, since the acts which can be produced by substantial forms are manifold, and since there is a certain natural succession among the posited acts themselves, we are led to discern different types of active potencies as immediately responsible for different "species"of operations.

In the case of creatures, we examine the multiple operations of which they are capable, and the types of objects or concrete effects to which these operations must correspond or must be related; and we thus come to arrange the "active potencies" themselves in various genera and species. But in the case of God (in whom there can be no separation of operation and substance) we are led to posit active potency from a study of His effects only [28], and not of His eternal operation. And from the knowledge of His unlimited effects and His universal providence, we rise to a rather tentative but nonetheless certain knowledge of His eternally-active omnipotence. The proximate rational ground for this attribution of active potency to God seems to be the principle that "there must be an active potency corresponding to every passive potency" [29], coupled with the realization that the whole universe of passive potencies, taken as a system, must correspond to some single, simple, and infinitely efficacious active potency [30].

[22] *In I Sent.*, d. 42, q. 1, a. 1.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *De Pot.*, Art. I, c.
[25] *De Ente*, Ch. VI.
[26] *De Virtute in Comm.*, I, 4, ad. 3.
[27] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. VIII, § 45.
[28] Cf. *S. Th.*, Q. 25, Art. 1.
[29] *S. C. G.*, II, Ch. 22 : "omni potentia(e) passivae respondet potentia activa".
[30] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d. 42, q. 1, a. 1.

While the omnipotence of God is intelligible to us only through consideration of the dependent potency of the universe taken as a whole, the active potency of creatures becomes intelligible to us through the various types of operations and movements which take place in and among them.

By consideration of the directly perceptible phenomenon of self-movement in living creatures, we easily arrive at the notion of the necessity for some active potential principle to supply the basis for such motions. The least perfect type of such self-movement is the phenomenon of growth and alimentation which is perceptible in all corporeal living beings, and to which we ascribe the corresponding active potency of "vegetation" [31]. The most advanced expression of such self-motion is the phenomenon of self-*loco*-motion, which we perceive in animals which do not have their food immediately present to them (i.e., through the soil, etc.) [32]; and we correspondingly ascribe the potency of "locomotion" as the principle of such advanced movements [33].

By consideration of other indirectly perceptible phenomena, we can also arrive at the notion of the existence of a purely immanent principle of activity, the active power of intellection. Our fundamental method in this case is the method of introspection. Using the data given to us through the common sense, imagination, and memory, and seeing by reflection the "peripheral" activities of the passive intellect in the operations of the imagination, we are led to seek for the sufficient reason of all such interiorly motivated movements. And we find such a sufficient reason only by positing a faculty in man which, though dependent on external objects and external stimuli as *conditions* for the movement which it causes, nevertheless in its essence is autonomous. And this is the faculty of intellect. In lieu of this faculty, we would be absolutely without sufficient reason for the phenomena of abstraction and conceptualization; for our experience shows that these latter operations are not directly proportionate to any external and material conditions which may give rise to them, but rather go *beyond* these conditions.

Finally, seeing that the intellect is essentially autonomous, and only connected *per accidens* with the various concomitant phenomena which take place in man along with the more essential operations of these faculties,

[31] Cf. *In II De Anima*, Lect. III, § 256, 257; and *In I De Anima*, Lect. XIV, § 199.

[32] Cf. *In VIII Phys.*, Lect. XV, ad fin. : "Probat quod ..."; also, *I De Virt. in Comm.*, Art. III.

[33] Note that the potency of "locomotion" corresponds to a particular *genus of operation*, while the potency of "vegetation" expresses the common-denominator "spontaneity" which is the *modus operandi* of all living things, *qua* living. Cf. *In I De Anima*, Lect. XIV, § 199-201; and *In II De Anima*, Lect .VI, § 300.

we come to realize that such a faculty can, and indeed must, exist in a *pure* state in some type of being. That is to say, there must be some type of being or group of beings, which understands without depending on external objects or being subject to temporal progression. For, as St. Thomas says, "whatever exists *per accidens* in any nature, is not found in all instances of that nature" [34]; and he concludes that there must be some instance of the intellective nature in which intellection is found without the concomitant phenomena of abstraction, temporal progression, etc., for

> ... in whatsoever genus is found an inferior exemplification of some perfection, there must be present, within that same genus, a specific type or instance of the pure and preeminent exemplification of that perfection [35].

2. The variety and relative capacities of passive potency

As the bed of an ocean is indisputably the *sine qua non* for all the fluctuations and alterations effected on its surface – so also passive potency is, in a very real way, the foundation for all the existential modifications which take place in, or through the agency of, a thing. Not only is passive potency directly responsible for all the "passivities" in a thing, i.e., for each and every way in which it is capable of receiving perfection : but it is also indirectly necessary as a substratum for active potencies, and all the operations to which these active potencies give rise. As St. Thomas says,

> In a thing which possesses active potency in a dependent way, there must be presupposed some kind of passive potency to act as a receptacle for the active potency [36].

We shall examine later on in this study [37] the nature of the proportion which exists between active and passive potency in separate substances. Suffice it to say here that there can be no active potency which is not ground-

[34] Cf. *S. Th.*, Q. 51, Art. 1, c. : "Quod accidit aliqui naturae, non invenitur universaliter in natura illa".

[35] Cf. *Ibid.*, "In quocumque ... genere invenitur aliquid imperfectum, oportet praeexistere aliquid perfectum in genere illo". It should be noted that in the foregoing arguments St. Thomas uses the words, "nature" and "genus", as if he considered "intellective" and "non-intellective" as the fundamental genera dividing up all of being : so that, in this sense, "rational animal" would not only be a species of *material* being, but, in a broader sense, a sub-species of the species of "intellective being", which itself could be relegated to the broader *genus* of *potential*, or created, being.

[36] *S. Th.*, Spl., Q. 35, a. 3 ad 1 (ref. : *In IV Sent.*, d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, qa 3) : "In eo qui habet potentiam activam ab altero, praeexigitur ad potentiam activam potentia passiva, quae recipere possit potentiam activam".

ed in some way in passive potency – which gives it the very possibility of existence.

If we prescind from the order of *metaphysical* existence, and confine ourselves to the sphere of *physical* and phenomenal change, we find the paragon of passive potencies in this sphere to be prime matter. For our criterion in evaluating passive potencies is the relative type and perfection of act to which they are related. And prime matter is ultimately the capacity to receive all material forms, all corporeally receptible acts, provided only the proper material conditions obtain :

> Prime matter is in potency to all forms, but receives these forms only in a certain order : For before everything else it is in potency to the forms of the elements; and then, passing through this state, becomes potential to the various other forms, according to the dispositions and relative proportions of those elemental forms which it already has [38].

Prime matter is thus the most passive and potential entity in the physical sphere. However, if we look more closely at prime matter, we see that it is not pure passivity, pure potency. It is always part of a real, composite corporeal essence; and therefore cannot even be thought of in abstraction from its real corporeal existence. I cannot think of "prime matter", and at the same time entertain a doubt in my mind as to whether it has actual material existence; for by definition, prime matter is a principle of actual corporeal beings. The size and type of corporeal being makes no difference. As long as there is one corporeal being of any description, it would be meaningless to talk about a "purely possible" prime matter, and to ask whether this potency has "yet" been actuated.

However, if we transcend the physical realm of change and essential components, and pass to the sphere of metaphysical components, we find that we can ask such a question about the *essence*, taken as a whole. For example, as St. Thomas says in the *De Ente et Essentia*, Chapter IV, I can think of a "phœnix", without knowing whether one actually exists or not. I can abstract from the existence of an essence. The converse, of course, would not hold true : I could not consider "existence", and wonder whether it has been determined and made substantial. But such an abstraction *would* seem to be possible with regard to the essence.

[37] Cf. *Infra*, p. 98.

[38] *In XII Metaph.*, Lect. II, p. 624 Parma : "Licet ... materia prima sit in potentia ad omnes formas, tamen quodam ordine suscipit eas. Per prius enim est in potentia ad formas elementares, et eis mediantibus secundum diversas proportiones commixtionum est in potentia ad diversas formas".

Essence, then, is the most ultimate of potencies, in that it is precisely that potency which corresponds to existence itself, to the first and ultimate act of the whole being, to the very *act* of the form. The "essential" characteristic of essence is that it be receptive of existence. In material things it is also subject to change : but this is not due to essence *qua* potential, but to essence *qua* material.

Besides prime matter and essence, which are two facets of substantial passive potency, we can also distinguish various accidental passive potencies : To this category belong all those corporeal capacities or organs which render a corporeal being passive in the physical sense, i.e., capable of "further perfection". Thus the capacity of clay to take on new shapes, the capacity of the sense organs to receive concrete *intentiones*, the capacity of the sense appetites in man to be sublimated to the perfection of rational behavior through the *vis cogitativa*, would all be physical passive potencies. In addition to these physical passive potencies there are two instances of an accidental passive potency in the metaphysical order; namely, the possible intellect, which is potential to accidental existential perfection, but is situated outside the sphere of temporal change [39]; and the will, which, as the "intellective appetite", [40] is a "moved mover" directly under the jurisdiction of the "unmoved mover" among human faculties – the intellect [41].

3. Comparison of active with passive potency

Although it is necessary to use the word "potency" with reference to both active and passive types because of their *de facto* mutual inseparability, nevertheless a certain ambiguity may result unless we clearly distinguish the precise way in which they are related to one another.

Active potency, in all its forms, seems always to presuppose some type of spontaneity, of self-motion, of self-determination [42]. Passive potency, on the other hand, seems to be always conditioned from without [43]. All the

[39] Cf. *De Subst.*, *Sep.* Ch. XIX, § 113.

[40] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 81, a. 3, c.

[41] *Ibid.*, Q. 80, a. 2, c.

[42] The "power" of an impermeable metal to withstand any hindrance or obstacle, which St. Thomas refers to in *In I Sent.*, d. 42, q. 1, a. 1, would seem to be reducible to an accidental form consequent on particular matter (cf., e.g., *De Ente et Essentia*, Ch. 6, where St. Thomas speaks of such forms).

[43] For example, among the intellective powers, the will, although it seems to possess a certain spontaneity with regard to external effects, control of bodily movement, etc., is "passive" in its own context, the context of spiritual potencies – since it must always be determined by the species of the possible intellect. Thus among the intellective powers

various types of passive potency seem to be dependent on external agents or external conditions for their actuation or for their perpetuation in act. For example, the passive intellect in the sensible part of man's soul "lies in wait" for the intelligible form given from "above"; the slab of marble "lies in wait" for the form which the sculptor is to give it. And ultimately, all that is material or potential is dependent on the active power of God, which either perfects or sustains it, both directly and through the agency of secondary causes.

D. SUBDIVISIONS OF ACTIVE AND PASSIVE POTENCY

To conclude our discussion of these fundamental active and passive types of potency, let us examine some of the subtypes or aspects of potency, which St. Thomas mentions explicitly or implicitly, and which can be categorized, respectively, on the basis of their operative (active) or receptive (passive) orientation.

1. Subdivisions of active potency

a. Universal potency may be ascribed to all those active potencies which are of a higher, i.e., more eminent, gradation in the hierarchy of potential beings. Thus the angelic intelligence extends to all the objects which inferior intelligences encompass in their scope; and the active potency of God extends to all of creation, continually actuating it and conserving it in being [44].

b. Exemplary potency is the power of some ideal prototype to serve as a model after which other things are subsequently or consequently fashioned. For example, an artifact is subsequent to an exemplary idea in the artist's mind; and every created perfection is consequent upon the consummate perfection of the Divine Word, which it mirrors in some finite way [45].

c. Absolute potency is the active creative power of God, considered in precision from His will and wisdom [46] insofar as it is absolutely capable of creating anything which is not self-contradictory, e.g., a winged horse.

there is only one "active" potency – the agent intellect which functions as an unmoved mover, as it were, in the realm of concepts and volitions.

[44] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 57, Art. 2.

[45] Cf. *In I Sent.*, d. 42, q. 2, a. 1.

[46] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 25, Art. 5, ad. 1.

d. Ordered potency, on the other hand, is this same creative power of God, considered in its *de facto* union and identity with His will and wisdom [47].

e. Natural potency is the self-sufficiency of natural powers to perform certain operations, without any special assistance in the supernatural order [48]. For example, the agent intellect of man is self-sufficient to lead him to knowledge in the light of first principles.

2. Subdivisions of passive potency

a. Subjective potency is the capacity of an actually constituted substance to be perfected and completed by its accidents; for any such substance, considered as a subject or substratum for accidents, is related to its accidents as potency to act [49]. This is not to say that there is any temporal sequence in the perfection of a substance through its accidents : but only that the accidents of a being express fully those perfections which exist in only a "seminal" way in the substance. In the case of a man who becomes a doctor, for example, the new perfection which accrues to him is a result of the natural fulfillment of some capacity present in his particular essence: the progression of time which takes place in the attainment of this perfection is only due to the exigencies of human nature, which requires a temporal unfolding of the material principle, for its perfection. In the angels, the full perfection of all "true" accidents (i.e., those which are predicable *simpliciter*) would seem to have taken place immediately (i.e., aeviternally) with their reception of their substantial *esse* [50].

b. "Obediential potency" is a strictly theological term used to designate the capacity of creatures to be "raised above themselves" through the operations of divine grace [51].

c. "Positive" potency [52] is a term *we* might use to distinguish that material principle which, St. Thomas tells us [53], causes the existence of a thing by

[47] Cf. *Ibid.*

[48] Cf. *Ibid.*, III, Q. 1, Art. 3, ad. 3.

[49] Cf. *Ibid.*, I, Q. 3, Art. 6, c.

[50] Although we can mentally distinguish a certain succession of natural and supernatural beatitude, etc., this is not a temporal succession. Cf. *S. Th.*, Q. 62, Art. 5, c and ad 2.

[51] Cf. *S. Th.*, III, Q. 1, Art. 3, ad 3.

[52] Although St. Thomas does not use the adjectives, "positive" and "negative", as applied to potency, he does refer to potency-as-capacity in a twofold sense : sometimes in such a way as to emphasize that it is a capacity-for some actuation, sometimes in such

simply supplying a substratum for the form of that thing – as the mother supplies the raw material out of which a human being is generated. As applied to the sphere of strictly immaterial beings, the analogous "material" principle would be the essence, which is potential to the reception of *esse* [54].

d. "Negative" potency, on the other hand, might be used to designate the privation of other forms, which is caused by the coadaptation of the material principle to the single form which it has. This privation causes a corresponding appetite or tendency in the material principle, to pursue other forms, which it does not have [55]. In the angels, who are immaterial and unchangeable essences, the analogous privation would not seem to be any dynamic principle of change, but simply of static non-identity [56]; and there would be no corresponding natural appetite to possess all forms physically, but only the appetite to be united to all things intentionally, i.e., through knowledge. It seems to be of potency in this negative or privative sense, that St. Thomas is speaking when he says, in the *De Ente et Essentia* [57] that, as we move up the hierarchy of creatures, the superior beings have *more* act but *less* potency. For any increase in actuality implies a proportional diminution of limitations and privations.

Having completed the differentiation of potency according to the main senses in which it seems to be used by St. Thomas, we might note that all the above-mentioned sub-types and aspects of potency are applicable to separate substances, with the exception of absolute and ordered potency, which seem to be strictly applicable only to God; and perhaps also of exemplary potency (St. Thomas seems to indicate that this latter is not attributable to separate substances *simpliciter*) [58].

We should also note that, when it comes to the question of actually applying the "active" and "passive" categories to concrete *esse*, a certain

a way as to call attention to the fact that every actuated or fulfilled capacity excludes of its very nature, certain privations (although it leaves room for other privations, i.e., other capacities-for). In order to present the notion of potency-as-capacity with optimum clarity, it would seem useful to make explicit the distinction between these two aforesaid aspects.

[53] *In I Phys., Lect.* XV; "Probat quod ...".

[54] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. VIII, § 44.

[55] *In I Phys.*, Lect. XV; "Ostendit idem ...".

[56] Cf. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*; Tome 2, p. 101 : "Tot sunt praesentiae, quot formae praesentes, et similiter tot carentiae seu absentiae et privationes, quot formae absentes".

[57] *De Ente et Essentia*, Ch. IV.

[58] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, a. 3, ad 1.

relativity obtains. For example, substantial form is passive to the reception of *esse*, but active in relationship to prime matter; the agent intellect is "active" with regard to all other human faculties, but "passive" with regard to the illumination of faith, which requires an "obediential" capacity of the intellect as its prerequisite [59]. But the cognition of these relativities is facilitated if one understands the fundamental distinction of active from passive potency – to which all other distinctions are subordinated – and which is itself the fundamental "relativity".

[59] Such a relativity can also be seen in the case of the will. St. Thomas declares that the operation of the will is the "act of a being in act" (*S.Th.*, I, q. 59, a.1, ad 3). But he also declares that the will is a "moved mover", actuated by the intellect (*Ibid.*, q. 80, a.2, c.). The seeming disparateness of the two statements requires explanation :

In the domain of execution, the will is an active potency. In the domain of specification, however, the will is a passive potency; passive, that is, to the reception of ideas of goodness, or right and wrong, etc. from the intellect. St. Thomas could not, however, denominate these two aspects an "agent will" and a "possible will"-setting up a parallel with the case of the intellect. For the will is only active with regard to human activity, only passive with regard to the intellect. It is not a self-contained totum of passivity/activity, as is the intellect.

III.

THE POWERS OF SEPARATE SUBSTANCES

A. PROBLEMS ARISING IN THE INVESTIGATION OF THESE POWERS

Unless one understood the mechanism of the automatic gearshift which is found in some automobiles, he would find it hard to comprehend the unity of operation which is found in the processes of shifting and clutching such automobiles. In the same way, if one does not first attend to the different way in which the concept, "active potency", is applied to composite substances and to separate substances – he will fail to understand the more advanced type of powers which are attributable to separate substances. The power of intellection, for instance, is attributed to both rational (i.e. composite intellectual) creatures and pure (i.e. separate) intellectual creatures; but it has immensely different meanings in each attribution. For, as applied to men, it signifies a perfection which is gradually and temporally acquired, which is separable into distinct "moments", *actus primi* and *actus secundi*, and so forth. But in separate substances, there is to be found neither temporal elaboration of thought, nor temporal perfectibility of impressed species [1]. In other words, in separate substances, there is never a "time" when the thought of some action to be done is conceived, without having already been done; never a "time" when some principle is conceived, without the conclusions being immediately and explicitly conceived also.

When we speak of the "powers" of separate substances, therefore, we are not just referring to a "principle of activity" in the usual sense. For the powers of separate substances neither pass temporally from act to more perfect act, as do corporeal vegetative potencies; nor are they merely the active aspect of one integral power, as is the case with the agent intellect in man [2]. Our closest approximation to a description of the meaning of

[1] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XIX, § 113 : "Relinquitur quod ... [Angelicae] ... substantiae operatio et per consequens substantia omnino sint extra omnem temporalem successionem".

[2] *In III De Anima*, Lect. x, § 732.

"active power" in their regard, might be to say that they are "frozen" in a state of dynamic perfection. The various perfections that we conceive as being added to them, are possessed by them in a quasi-eternal way. Being outside and ontologically above the sphere of time, they comprehend time *per eminentiam*; and there is nothing which is new in the material universe or the intellects of men, which has not already been fully worked out, perfectly comprehended, in some way, in the intellects of separate substances [3].

The only progression which obtains in the passage of the active powers of a separate substance into act is a certain natural (non-temporal) progression of orientations of thoughts and the affections and movements consequent on these thoughts [4]. These successive operations are above time precisely because they are above the motion which time measures – namely the motion, or act, of a being in potency. All we can say about them is that they are further active expressions of a being already in act.

Granted that the powers of separate substances are of an immeasurably higher active type than the powers we have direct experience of, how are we to investigate them?

First of all, St. Thomas tells us [5], we must restrict the bounds of our research. We must give up all hope of categorizing angels as we do corporeal species, since there is no way for us to perceive either the accidental or the essential differences on the basis of which these pure spirits are ordered among themselves. Although we can expound and clarify what faith reveals to us about the celestial hierarchies, we are unable to give any rational demonstration of such hierarchical arrangements.

Any scientific knowledge, therefore, of separate substances and their operations, must necessarily be indirect – i.e., perceived through their effects, and through observation of the more imperfect forms of intellectual power found in man. For by abstraction from the imperfect mode of our own intellectual operations, we can distinguish what is accidental from what is essential in the sphere of spiritual powers; and by observation of the effects of separate substances on us, and on the world about us, we can form some idea of the scope of the powers of separate substances.

However, granted that this is so, two problems immediately face us :

[3] *S. Th.*, I, 56, art. 2, c. As will be shown further on (p. 94 ff.) the various motions and changes which we attribute to angels, are really only attributable to them in a *per accidens* manner.

[4] *S. C. G.*, Ch. 100.

[5] *De Ente et Essentia*, Ch. V.

1) How can we determine what is purely "accidental" in human intellective operations, unless we first have some knowledge of the operations of higher intellectual creatures, to use as a basis of comparison? 2) If our comparison of human cognitive powers to those of separate substances must, consequently, presuppose some prior knowledge of separate substances on the basis of their effects, what criterion are we to use in ascribing the proper effect to the proper cause? For example, in the event that our mind is illumined by an angel, we would have no natural means of distinguishing such an illumination from the illumination of our own agent intellect [6]. How are we to distinguish the sphere of spiritual, from that of corporeal, causes, in the production of such effects?

To the first problem, St. Thomas would probably answer that we have an essential and connatural knowledge of our own thought, and are thus able to distinguish what is essential from what is accidental in that thought; so that the method of introspection is valid, even if we do not know the full extension of the genus of "intellective creature". In answer to the second, St. Thomas would no doubt say that our main endeavor should be, not to attribute particular effects to particular causes (as Plato tried to do), but to ascribe to every complete but not self-explanatory system or genus of effects some cause to account for the actuality of the whole. Aristotle (in St. Thomas' opinion) did this with the maximal accuracy possible, in investigating the systems of physical movement in the universe. And this seems to be the reason why St. Thomas attributes the *prime* importance and validity to the method of Aristotle for coming to a scientific knowledge of the existence and nature of separate substances.

B. MEANS OF DEMONSTRATION PROPOSED BY ST. THOMAS

1. The Aristotelian method

Aristotle proceeded to the investigation of separate substances by the "most manifest and certain way" available to us, namely, through observation of physical motion.

Seeing that all physical agents had to be moved from outside, and seeing that all the multifarious manifestations of motion we see – for example, generation, alteration, augmentation – were traceable in the final analysis to

[6] *S. Th.*, I, Q. III, Art. 1, ad 3.

[7] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. II, § 8.

a finite number of eternal and uniform locomotions, terminating in the fixed stars [8], Aristotle concluded that a different "unmoved mover" would have to be responsible for each separable eternal locomotion. Since there are from 47 to 55 distinguishable and independent eternal motions in the celestial spheres, there would, accordingly, have to be the same number of unmoved movers, giving both a real impetus and a rational ground to these motions. Such unmoved movers, from the very fact that they were unmoved – that is, without the material potentiality of mobility – would also necessarily be *incorporeal* movers since corporeality is synonymous with mobility [9].

St. Thomas agrees in general with Aristotle's demonstration of the existence and incorporeal nature of the unmoved movers; and disagrees only with his numbering of such movers. It is right, he says, to say that there are at least as many incorporeal movers as there are independent celestial motions; but it is wrong to restrict the number of spiritual substances on this basis [10]. For this would be to subordinate a superior to an inferior ontological order.

2. The method of Plato and his followers

Whereas Aristotle's "separate substances" were movers separated from bodies, Plato's separate substances were Forms separated from matter. And Plato demonstrates the existence and nature of such Forms in a way quite similar to the ''fourth way" of St. Thomas for the proof of the existence of God [11]. He bids us to examine our perception of things, and the evaluations we give to them. We notice, he says, that there are imperfect and unstable forms of all perfections – for instance, unity and goodness. We come to abstract from such imperfect forms, and to compare them with one another; and we eventually arrive, by such a process, at the necessity for some perfect and absolutely stable Forms, giving reality and perfection to all inferior and transitory forms [12].

St. Thomas says that Plato, in positing a certain number of stable realities in terms of which various material perfections like unity and goodness could be explained, was "treading a surer path" than the ancient naturalists [13]. However, he also observes, Plato went too far. For it is not neces-

[8] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. II, § 8.
[9] *Ibid.*, § 9.
[10] *Ibid.*, § 12.
[11] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 2, Art. 3, c.
[12] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. I, §, 4, § 5.

sary that there should be separate Forms corresponding to all of our universal ideas [14]. Although it is safe to say that, in general, inferior realities must be ordered to a higher reality or higher realities [15], it is unwarranted for us to conclude that there must be separate higher realities conforming to all the distinct logical constructs we make of material being [16].

3. Other subsidiary methods mentioned by St. Thomas :

a. Praeternatural phenomena. The works of magic performed by wizards, and the knowledge of science and foreign tongues displayed by "possessed" people, would seem to definitely point to the existence of some praeternatural intelligent powers working on earth [17].

b. Separability of corporeality. If two things are found conjoined, one of which can exist without the other, then the other should also be able to exist alone. Therefore, in the case of man, since we see that all of his corporeal operations can exist separate-from-intellection in the plant world and animal world, we might reasonably suppose that the intellective power, which in man is conjoined with corporeal powers, may be found in some separate, incorporeal existent [18].

c. Superiority of form to matter. Rather than suppose that every form must be ordered to some limiting matter, it would be more reasonable for us to believe that the very existence of forms in an imperfect state implies the existence of a more perfect type of form. That is to say, the very fact that material forms are "hemmed in" by obstacles, contraries, and limitations that "frustrate" them from being explicated in their full perfection, implies that there must be some more perfect type of form, free from the imperfections accruing to matter [19], and *ipso facto* intellective (in that an immaterial form, not being received in matter, must possess itself in an immaterial, i.e. actually intelligible, way) [20].

d. The potential state of human intellection. If we take ' 'intelligent being" as a genus, and consider the fact that the possible intellect of man is only

[13] *Ibid.*, § 4.
[14] *Ibid.*, Ch. II, § 8.
[15] *Ibid.*, § 12.
[16] *Ibid.*, § 8.
[17] *Ibid.*, § 11.
[18] Cf. *De Spirit. Creat.*, V, Sed contra.
[19] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. VII, § 35, 36.
[20] *Ibid.*, § 41.

on the threshold of full and perfect understanding, we might reasonably conclude that there is some other type of intellect which has already reached the full perfection accruing to its particular species [21].

C. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PHYSICAL BASES TO METAPHYSICAL CONCLUSIONS

Whichever of the above methods we use to establish the existence of separate substances, our conclusions in regard to their nature and operations will be largely the same. Whether such hypothetical beings be related to material substances as mover to moved, or perfect to imperfect, or spiritual to corporeal, or actual to potential, there will be a common basis upon which to subsequently develop our metaphysics of separate substances. These separate substances must be immaterial, independent, fully in act according to their substance. Hence they must be intellective, eminently spontaneous, aeviternal, and so forth. Our metaphysics of the angelic powers, therefore, results in the application of the general principles of metaphysics to what minimal knowledge we have of the nature of separate substances. However, provided we are not deceived in these minimal and fundamental premises (and our Faith, says St. Thomas, gives us added assurance that we are not), our application of metaphysical principles to the sphere of separate substances is not merely a valid, but an enriching, endeavor.

D. THE POWER OF SELF-MOTION IN SEPARATE SUBSTANCES :

The power of self-motion is attributable to separate substances only in a pre-eminent sense : that is, precisely in so far as they are unmoved movers, completely spontaneous, determined in no way from without, undergoing no dichotomy or transition due to multiplicity of parts or imperfection of nature.

In animals, and even more so in plants, the "spontaneous" movements seem to be completely dependent on and directly proportional to, the type and intensity of transient actuation received. In man, there is still a dependence upon environmental stimuli for preservation in existence, for initiation

[21] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 51, Art. 1, c.

of thought, and for objective references in terms of which he must think; but the type and intensity of thought is in no way proportional to the type and intensity of the environmental stimuli. In the separate substances, finally, we seem to have the complete contrary of the case of animals. There would seem to be, at least in the highest separate substance, complete and unconditioned spontaneity, a movement arising solely from within, determined in no way from without; a movement completely dependent on the spontaneous self-determination of the separate substance [22].

The self-movement of all purely corporeal animate creatures is fundamentally conditioned by the separate substances, who move the universe as a whole through appetition [23]; that is, by presenting to the primary mobile beings their final cause, which "automatically" causes them to become efficient causes of the various types of material being [24].

The question naturally arises here, just how is the motion transmitted to the primary celestial bodies, and thence to the rest of the universe? Do the celestial spheres have souls, rendering them capable of apprehending the intelligible good, or *appetibile per se*? If not, then just in what way can pure intelligences transmit motion to them?

In regard to the question of the animation of celestial spheres, St. Thomas expresses doubt. In his commentary on a passage in the *De Anima*, in which Aristotle leaves open the possibility of supernal types of animals with the power of intellection, St. Thomas interprets this as a reference to separate substances. It would, he says, refer also to the celestial spheres, "on condition that such celestial bodies are truly animated "[25]. In this he seems to be following the tradition of Augustine and other authorities, who expressed similar doubts as to the animation of celestial bodies [26].

In any event, if these celestial bodies are inanimate, and thus moved neither by an intelligible or a sensible good, being ' 'moved by the appetible" would have to have an equivocal meaning in their regard. Perhaps it is reducible to a natural and pre-conscious appetite in material forms to participate in the *esse* of God. Or, as St. Thomas indicates in one place, it could possibly refer to the continual reception of formless and timeless material *esse* [27], i.e. a "pure" material *esse* not determined by any form, but itself

[22] *In VIII Phys.*, Lect. XIII, *passim.*

[23] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 110, Art. 1, ad 2; *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. II, § 9; and *S. C. G.*, II, Ch. 99.

[24] Cf. *De Princ. Nat.*, med.; cf. also *S. Th.*, I, Q. 115, Art. 3, c and ad 2.

[25] *In II De Anima*, Lect. V, § 293.

[26] Cf. Augustine, *Enchiridion, sive De Fide, Spe, et Caritate*, Bk. I, Ch. 58, Patr. Lat. 40, p. 259. See also *supra*, p. 11, n. 19.

[27] Cf. *De Spirit. Creat.*, VI, ad 2.

causing the determination and temporally measurable movements of all living and non-living material beings.

St. Thomas distinguishes three general ways in which the separate substances can transmit movement to the celestial bodies, in the event that these celestial bodies are not besouled : 1) Sometimes, he says, they move such bodies as final causes (i.e., by proposing to them in some manner the natural *appetibile*). 2) Sometimes they cause movements in a subsidiary manner, in such a way that one separate substance, being united to a particular celestial body, is itself moved from without (presumably from a higher separate substance, which supplies the motion-inducing appetible). 3) Sometimes, finally, they move celestial bodies *per modum quo motor unitur mobili* (which would seem to imply movement of celestial bodies through "contact of power") [28].

However, in whatsoever way movement is transmitted by separate substances to the material universe, it should be noted that in the separate substances themselves there is no dichotomy of movent part and mobile part. There is no unfulfilled potentiality in a separate substance, and therefore the separate substance is completely unmoved, as regards the attainment of its natural perfection. And thus, if we say that a separate substance moves it*self*, this does not mean that there is any mobile and potential physical part in the separate substance, but only that the immaterial essence as a whole is "continually" movent and active, that is, completely "in act" of its very nature. It moves itself, precisely because it fully *is* itself, and because the self has been "already"aeviternally moved to full perfection. Just as "active potency" is predicable of God only in an eminent way, that is, in a non-accidental way; so also "self-motion" is predicable of separate substances eminently, that is, in a non-transitional way. They thus approach in the closest way to the perfection of "self-movement" in God, whose "self" *is* His own act, in an eternal and non-potential (unparticipated) manner [29].

E. THE POWER OF INTELLECTION IN SEPARATE SUBSTANCES

While the power of self-movement is predicable of separate substances only by way of eminence, the powers of intellection and volition are attri-

[28] Cf. *De Spirit. Creat.*, VI, c.

[29] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 9, Art. 1, ad. 1.

butable to separate substances as real and distinct faculties [30]. The power of intellection in a separate substance follows upon the very fact that it is an immaterial essence, in full possession of itself. By possessing its own essence in an *immaterial* way, it possesses itself in a *cognitive* way. And therefore, of its very nature, it is equipped with a certain "connatural" knowledge. This knowledge extends just so far as the intensity and perfection of its finite act. That is to say, each separate substance, according to its specific essential act, knows itself completely, and other things in a partial manner, in so far as the perfections of other things are contained in a unique way in the modality of its own essence [31].

In addition to this connatural knowledge, which a separate substance has in proportion to its own participated actuality, there is also a habitual knowledge, which is in direct proportion to its "negative" potency [32]. As St. Thomas says,

> Habits are attributable to angels only to the extent that there is some potency in them. ... And so ... in proportion to the potency which an angel has, it needs to be habitually perfected by certain intelligible species to make possible its proper operation [33].

This habitual knowledge is not a habit after the manner of the first principles in the human intellect, in the light of which new knowledge, and new ideas, are continually being acquired. Rather, it consists of the actual intelligible species with which each separate substance is perpetually and completely endowed to enable it to know other things [34].

A separate substance is created complete and perfect in both its connatural and its habitual knowledge. Its nature or form, being completely sundered from matter, knows itself *ipso facto*. And its reception of finite *esse* immediately and aeviternally sets it up in an intelligible relationship to all other finite beings, through the intelligible species.

All the connatural and habitual knowledge of a separate substance is received directly from its creator, and not in any way *ab extrinseco*. Since the whole being that they receive is not in any way constricted or obscured by matter, it is naturally intelligible and intelligent. And the concrete influx

[30] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 54, Art. 5, c.

[31] *S. Th.*, Ia IIæ, Q. 50, Art. 6, c.

[32] See p. 44, *supra*.

[33] *Ibid.*, "Inquantum invenitur in angelis de potentia, intantum in eis possunt habitus inveniri ... Et ideo ... inquantum est in potentia, indiget perfici habitualiter per aliquas species intelligibiles ad operationem propriam".

[34] Cf. *In III Sent.*, d. 14, Qa. II, ad. 1.

of ontological perfection which they receive from God is not only potentially intelligible, as is the case with material beings; but actually intelligible [35].

None of the intelligible species which a separate substance has, therefore, are received from other creatures. Rather, each separate substance is endowed by its creator with a spiritual clarity which contains in its comprehension the likenesses of all creatures, reflected according to the modality of its own essence [36]. It receives its intelligible species continually from the divine intellect, which is the summit of intelligible operation, containing in itself the similitudes of all things in an absolute way, and not according to any finite modality [37].

Although there are no physical parts in the pure simplicity of the angelic substance, the power of intellection in such a substance is still distinct from its capacity for existing, that is, its essence [38].

It is distinct, not as a separate part of the angel, but rather as a distinguishable faculty. And the act of understanding is an accident following upon the specific form which it has [39].

Thus in a very real way the apparatus of habitual species which a separate substance possesses enables it to overcome its potency, and become actually united with all other beings [40]. This actual spiritual union takes place continually, aeviternally. The angelic intellect is never in potency to the things which it is naturally equipped to know; nor does it use sensible phantasms as instruments from which abstraction must be made. And so there is no need in an angel for a "possible" intellect to enable it to be perfected in its natural store of knowledge: nor of an agent intellect, to abstract from phantasms [41].

It follows from the non-transitional mode of angelic cognition that there are no universal ideas in the angelic mind. None of the objects which an angel knows need be extracted from particular matter, in which they are immeshed; or re-applied actually to particulars to which they are only potentially related. In one simple and complete act, the angel knows particular beings in their full intelligibility [42]. All the objects of the angelic mind are rendered completely intelligible to it, and are being continually

[35] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, Art. 2, c.
[36] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, Art. 2, ad 1.
[37] *De Subst. Sep.*, § 82, p. 126.
[38] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 54, Art. 3, c.
[39] Cf. *De Ente*, Ch. VI.
[40] *S. Th.*, I-II, Q. 51, Art. 1, c. and ad 2.
[41] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 54, Art. 4, c. and ad 2.
[42] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XV, § 81, p. 124-125.

understood in the perfect and unobscurable lucidity of its act of understanding.

But though all the intelligible objects of the mind of a separate substance are continually and completely present to it, we can discern in its operation of understanding certain orientations or "concentrations", in so far as it "turns its attention" to this or that object. A dim comparison to this would seem to be the power of sight in man, which can encompass in its scope a whole panorama of natural objects, while focusing only on a single object at any single moment of time. The comparison is dim, however, in that there is no temporal transition in a separate substance from one object to another.

The *intelligere* of a separate substance might best be described as one simple act, with many ramifications; all of which "ramifications" are measured not according to the standards of temporal progression, but according to the modality of its own essence and its own specific type of aeviternal progression.

A separate substance, therefore, in "turning its attention" to any one of the objects of its intelligence, does not cease to have a panorama of other objects completely and clearly present to it. Just as starfish which have eyes all around their body continually have all their surroundings present to their sensibility, no matter in which direction they are travelling; so also the separate substance continually has all its intelligible objects before its mind, no matter which of these objects it may be emphasizing at any particular aeviternal "instance".

The different objects of the mind of a separate substance might be conveniently classified into 1) self; 2) God; and 3) other creatures.

1. Knowledge of self

While the human soul is potential (through knowledge) to all material substantial forms, a separate substance is actually constituted as some specific form. Unlike man, whose soul is temporarily prevented by matter from fully possessing itself, the separate substance *is* its substantial form, and therefore possesses its own form completely. And the very fact that its form is separate from matter makes it *ipso facto* intelligible and understood (for it is only matter that impedes intelligibility) [43]. Therefore, without any mediating species being necessary, a separate substance comprehends itself in a cognitive way, through its own subsistent form [44]. This is the innate or

[43] *De Ente*, Ch. IV.

[44] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 56, Art. 1. c.

connatural knowledge of a separate substance, which follows from its very essence [45]. Both its essence and the proper perfection of its essence are intelligibly present to the separate substance in this primordial connatural act of cognition [46]. And thus an angel is present to itself, says St. Thomas [47], as the light of the eye is present both in and to it. Therefore a paradox comes about : for, while *in essendo* the intellect of a separate substance (in so far as it is an accidental perfection) is compared to its essence as act to potency, nevertheless *in intelligendo* the intellect becomes actualized by the essence which it itself perfects [48]. The self-knowledge of a separate substance, therefore, might best be described as a subsistent form's natural intentional possession of itself, by which it becomes related as potency to act with reference to its own essence.

2. Knowledge of God

Whereas a separate substance's knowledge of itself and of what immediately pertains to it, follows upon the finite *act* which it has and fully comprehends; its knowledge of that which is above and beyond the scope of this finite act is the fulfillment of a *potency*, i.e. the privative relationship in which it stands to other forms and perfections which it does not possess ontologically. While the knowledge resulting from its act is innate knowledge, the corresponding knowledge resulting from its potency, is an infused habitual knowledge. This habitual knowledge is most necessary in regard to God, to whom the separate substance is most in potency. The habitual knowledge of God results in a separate substance from the very fact that its whole essence is perceived as a species, a similitude, expressing some aspects of God [49]. And thus, by its habitual knowledge of God, the separate substance possesses itself in a new way : for in addition to possessing itself naturally and intentionally, it possesses itself precisely as a similitude, a species, of God. To say, then, that a separate substance has a habitual intelligible species of the Divine Word, is just to say that the separate substance receives the interior power to envision itself, not only as a "given" finite being, but as it were a mirror reflecting in a finite way the perfections of its creator [50]. This type of knowledge of God is the natural knowledge

[45] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XIII, § 76.
[46] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 87, Art. 3, c.
[47] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 56, Art. 3, c.
[48] *De Ver.*, VIII, 6, ad. 2.
[49] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 56, Art. 3, c.
[50] *Ibid.*

with which it is endowed, and must be understood as pre-existing in separate substances as a foundation and prerequisite to the beatific vision which they received when they were confirmed in glory [51].

3. Knowledge of other creatures

If we consider the angelic essence as a self-comprehending intelligible form, we see that from its essence alone it must have a "common" or general knowledge of creatures. And the reason for this is that a separate substance, in understanding itself, does not consider itself as isolated from existence, but rather as existent and as true; and this entails a general knowledge of intelligible "being" itself, a concept which contains in itself implicitly all the different types of being [52]. This general knowledge of creatures needs to be perfected by the "proper" knowledge of creatures which results from the "impressed species" [53], which supply the formal perfection of the intellect of the separate substance. These impressed species enable the separate substance to know other creatures according to their own proper modality and singularity. They are, to use a simile, like the images in a mirror which are reflected with more or less perfection, according to the brightness, and size, and proximity of the mirror. The mind is conjoined with them in the same way that essence is joined with existence, that is, as distinguishable but inseparable realities [54]. By means of them both corporeal and spiritual creatures are aeviternally comprehended by each separate substance according to its own peculiar spiritual mode. The corporeal creatures are understood without the need for any universal idea [55], or any application of intelligible universal to sensible singular; for in separate substances, which have no instrumental need of bodily senses, there is no contradiction between the intelligible and the singular, and both are comprehended simultaneously [56]. Other separate substances are understood in a direct and connatural way, that is, in the same way that material essences are directly intelligible to the human mind. This, of course, does not include the *thoughts* of these other separate substances, which are in the sphere of intentional being; but only their natural being. In the case of the thoughts of *men* however, the sphere of angelic cognition would seem to extend a bit further; since they can glean

[51] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 62, Art. 1, ad. 3.
[52] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, Art. 1, c and ad 3.
[53] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 56, Art. 2, c.
[54] *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 3, 14^{m}.
[55] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 57, Art. 2, c.
[56] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XV, § 81.

a reliable indication of a man's thought from observation of his interior dispositions, the movements of his sensitive appetite, etc. [57].

The question naturally arises, whether separate substances can know evil and vile things, both of the physical and spiritual type. The answer would have to be that there is no problem in this regard. For angels are capable of knowing such things in the same way that God knows them, that is, without "resting" in them, and without turning even for a moment from the contemplation of the divine essence [58]. Under such conditions, there would be no incongruity in knowing the evil or the vile.

4. The order discernible in integral angelic cognition

As compared with our own human mode of cognition, the cognition of separate substances could be said to be continuous, unchanging, always concerned with the selfsame objects. However, considered in itself, there is discernible a threefold order : First of all, the natural cognition of a separate substance is ordered and related to its supernatural cognition; the *lumen* of grace and glory is added to its natural infused knowledge, without destroying or hampering the latter [59]. Secondly, according to a natural sequence, the knowledge of all creatures in their own *esse* (*cognitio vespertina*, based either on natural species or the perception of individual creatures in the beatific vision) must be ordered to the knowledge of these creatures according to the primordial *esse* which they have in God's mind (*cognitio matutina*) [60]. And thus we might say that to every naturally subsistent being there corresponds an intelligible (but not subsistent, as Plato would have it) form, in the intellects of separate substances [61]. Finally, there is discernible a natural ordering of an angel's "oblique contemplation" (simultaneous combination of action and contemplation) to its "circular contemplation" (pure contemplative quiescence in God) [62]. Although all the above combinations of operation could be said to be taking place "at the same time",

[57] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 57, Art. 4, ad 3. N.B. "Knowledge of the future" among the angels takes place in like fashion : They prognosticate the future by observing the innermost tendencies of things and the highest physical causes (Cf. *Summa*, Q. 57, Art. 3, c.).

[58] *In XII Metaph.*, Lect. XI, ad fin.

[59] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 62, Art. 7, ad 1, ad 3.

[60] *S. Th.*, I. Q. 58, Art. 6, 7. The knowledge of God leads naturally and directly to a knowledge of creatures since the divine Word is the *operative art* through which all creatures are fashioned (cf. *In II Sent.*, d. 2, q. 1, 3, ad 3); and thus knowing creatures in God is like knowing a conclusion in its principle (cf. *Summa*, I, Q. 58, Art. 7, ad 2).

[61] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 56, Art. 2, c.

[62] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVIII, § 102-103.

when compared to our own temporal progressions from the active to contemplative life, and so forth; still, considered in themselves, and according to their own measure of duration, there must be a certain sequence among these different aspects or orientations of intellection.

F. THE POWER OF VOLITION IN SEPARATE SUBSTANCES :

1. The relationship of intellection to volition in separate substances

As has been shown above, a separate substance at its creation is endowed with a full store, so to speak, of infused habitual knowledge. There is no labor involved for them, in either acquiring intelligible species, or applying these species to the appropriate singulars. For in one single and aeviternal act of cognition, they both know the *rationes universales* of all created things, and know these creatures in all their singularity. And thus we say that, even though a separate substance may concentrate on this or that species at one "time", his whole store of knowledge is still actual, in so far as it is habitual and in so far as in concentrating on one species it does not become unaware of the others.

The will of a separate substance, as its intellectual appetite, must benefit from the actual nature of its intellection. If its intellect is created with all its intelligible species, the will must be created complete in full possession of its natural good (which is, by definition, intelligible). And if all its intelligible species are apprehended fully in their singularity as well, then the application of the will of a separate substance to both general and particular good must take place in a single act without temporal progression.

The separate substance, therefore [63], has already attained to its full measure of good, and possesses its intelligible and appetible end immovably. From this we must conclude that any "motions" or "progressions" which we seem to discern in separate substances are not what they seem to be. For true and univocal motions or progressions must lead to some end, and are complete and perfect only in their end [64]. If, then, there is anything like motion in separate substances, this is not related to some end which is not yet attained, but is rather the natural and spontaneous result of the attainment of its end. It would be more accurate to say, therefore, that the

[63] N.B. at this stage we are considering only the natural, not the supernatural, end of separate substances.

[64] Cf. *In VI Phys.*, Lect. VII, "Ostendit quomodo ...".

will of a separate substance rests immovably in its final end, but that this "resting" itself has multiple effects which, to our way of thinking, might be called "motions".

2. Primary and immediate effects of angelic volition

The primary and irreversible will-act of an angel is to rejoice without cessation in the fruition of the supreme good. However, this one act of delectation has many ramifications. It causes the angel to rejoice in creatures which participate in the divine goodness; in the intellective insights which they have concerning these creatures; in the works of divine providence, and so forth. All these different affective "motions" do not bring about any change or perfection in the angel, says St. Thomas; rather, they are just manifestations and explications of the perfection of act which they already possess, concomitant perfections of an essentially unchangeable being [65].

Again, the relative quiescence of circular and oblique contemplation "overflows" naturally in the so-called "direct" movements of contemplation, that is, in the direct ministration to creatures [66]. In such ministrations, for example if a "guardian angel" seems to leave heaven in order to be locally present with his charge [67], the separate substance does not actually desist from the contemplation of God. Rather, this continual contemplation of God is the motive force which causes and brings to conclusion all the "direct" movements. There is no more of a temporal succession between a separate substance's contemplation of *agenda* in God and the performance of these, than there is between its knowledge of universal species and the application of these to singular instances.

3. The mode of communication of separate substances among themselves

Communication or "locution" between separate substances raises some knotty problems consequent on the very simplicity and perfection of the nature of such substances. How can one separate substance communicate to another any knowledge or perfection which it does not already have by nature or from God? St. Thomas allows that the opinion of the Platonists,

[65] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 10, Art. 5, c. In a similar fashion, the "motions" of a fallen angel would result from its final election of its own finite good.

[66] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVIII, 102-103.

[67] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 113, Art. 6, ad 3.

who say that intelligible species themselves are communicated from angel to angel in descending order, has some plausibility [68]. However, he himself sides with the position of Aristotle, who implied that all separate substances receive their intelligible species directly from God, in whom they participate [69]. "Communication", then, between separate substances does not involve the transmission of intelligible species, but rather causes a heightened perception of, or a different insight into, those infused species which separate substances already have. That is to say, one separate substance communicates to another either by strengthening the natural light of the other, or by putting its own peculiar insights into terms of the impressed species which the other has [70]. This mode of communication seems analogous in the human sphere to the way that a teacher assists his student in arriving at knowledge, by being present to give order to his ratiocination, and to put more difficult concepts into terms already intelligible to the student. However, in the case of separate substances, there is involved no growth in natural knowledge. Also, a different type of "presence" becomes a prerequisite. There is no local propinquity or corporeal interaction. Rather, a spiritual propinquity is both the necessary prerequisite and the natural means by which such communication is facilitated [72]. And since, in the case of simple spiritual substances, the gifts of nature can never be disproportionate to the gifts of grace [71], such spiritual communications always take place from naturally superior to naturally inferior. In other words, all communications among separate substances take place in a natural hierarchical order. Similarly to the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, "the superior separate substances are, in their intelligibility, as it were the bread of their inferiors" [73]. Such communication requires neither local propinquity nor gesture nor word nor idea [74]; rather, it is initiated by the natural spiritual presence of superior angels to their immediate inferiors [75], and is perpetuated by the natural conversion of will on the part of superior angels to those inferiors which are dependent on them [76]. The cognition which

[68] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XI, § 61.

[69] Cf. *Ibid.*, Ch. XV, § 82.

[70] Cf. *S. Th.*, Q. 106, Art. 1, c and ad. 1; Q. 111, Art. 1 and 2.

[71] *In II Sent.*, d. 9, 2, ad. 6.

[72] Cf. *infra*, p. 69.

[73] *S. C. G.*, II, Ch. 98, ad fin. : "Superiores substantiae intelligibiles sunt quasi cibus inferiorum".

[74] *De Ver.*, IX, 1, c.

[75] Cf. *Ibid.*,

[76] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 106, Art. 1, c.

results from this communication among separate substances might best be described as a simple intuitive glance at the intelligible perfections which are made manifest by immediate superiors. As St. Thomas says,

> The illumination of one angel by another, is nothing else than the intensification of the understanding of an inferior angel by an inspection of something seen in its superior, which inspection leads to an increment of knowledge. ... And therefore the inferior angels receive an intensification of knowledge from their very continuation with their superiors; and this continuation takes place through an intuitive glance of the intellect [77].

4. The way in which separate substances affect purely material creatures

It is relatively easy to understand how one separate substance can "move" another through communication, since 1) the "moved" separate substance is an intellective creature capable of receiving direct impetus in an immaterial way; and 2) the "mover" and "moved" in this case have a spiritual affinity or attraction to one another, resulting from their spiritual locus or grade in the hierarchy of pure spiritual creatures. It is harder for us to understand how they can have any efficacious influence on purely material beings, which have neither intellective capacity nor, it would seem, any type of affinity with such pure spiritual creatures. If, as it seems, material creation is administered by its natural superior, the realm of separate substances, then the *modus operandi* in this case would seem to be something analogous to the conversion of will, by which one separate substance "moves" another in the area of knowledge. All material creatures within the jurisdiction of a separate substance would essentially be moved by it through the *imperium* of its will, which would seem to be analogous to the spiritual impetus by which the human soul is able to control the local movements of the particular body in which it is received. Although there may be some efflux of spiritual power from separate substances in causing such motions, the *imperium* itself would seem to be the essential factor, the necessary and sufficient reason for the motion. The *imperium* is not applied, however, to integral corporeal beings in a direct way. Rather, it is applied directly to certain superior corporeal motive forces, which indirectly are responsible for all corporeal

[77] *De Ver.*, IX, 1, c. : "Nihil ... est aliud angelum ab angelo illuminari, quam confortari intellectum inferioris angeli per aliquid inspectum in superiori, ad alia cognoscenda. ... Et ideo inferiores angeli confortantur ex eorum continuatione ad superiores, quae quidem continuatio est per intuitum intellectus".

movements [78]. In a word, the separate substances cause all subsidiary movements by causing that simple and uniform locomotion which Aristotle said was like life to all physical beings [79]. This primary locomotion resides pre-eminently in the celestial spheres, which are the highest corporeal motive forces, and is transmitted in a hierarchical order to the most inferior creatures e.g., the motions of the outer sphere would be transmitted to generable and corruptible beings through the medium of the sun [80]. It follows from this that the separate substance which moves the highest heaven would have a truly infinite control over all corporeal events, and that the others would have an analogous type of infinite control over their own sphere of activity [81]. When an angel moves a material being on earth, therefore, he moves it precisely by controlling the mainsprings of its corporeal existence, i.e. those fundamental motions which are most subtle, and, in a way, most interior, with respect to all the phenomenal motions and changes in an individual material existent.

5. The role of separate substances in the execution of divine providence

Through this power which separate substances have over material creation, they become the administrators of divine providence. For they are, says St. Thomas, the intellective instruments through which the "art" of divine providence is applied to every possible concrete situation [82]. Every operative art is perfect only to the extent that it is equal to, and actually extends to, every singular instance within its domain; and God's universal art is no exception to this rule. The separate substances are the most apt "instruments" for the execution of this art, in that their spiritual nature is directly proportioned to, and movable by, God; and in that they have control over the supreme corporeal agents. Thus it is that all of corporeal creation is, one way or another, administered by angels [83]. All movements in the universe (with the exception of the operations of the human will) must be caused or conditioned by separate substances through the

[78] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 110, Art. 2, ad .2.

[79] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 110, Art. 3, ad. 2. For Aristotle's description of the effects of this primary locomotion, see *Physics*, VIII, Ch. 1, 250b, 13.

[80] *De Spirit. Creat.*, a 6, ad. 8.

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] *De Subst. Sen.*, Ch. XIV, *passim.*

[83] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 63, Art. 7, c.

heavenly bodies [84]. It would even seem that each corporeal species of animals, plants, etc., would have an individual separate substance deputed to it to provide for it and sustain it [85]. And thus the "art" of divine providence, which in itself is the end of the universe and the good which no contrary can destroy or neutralize, is extended to all things through the angels in an intelligent and ordered way, leaving nothing to chance, leading all things inexorably to their end, that is, to itself [86].

Thus the angels, as the very etymology of their name implies, are the "messengers" conveying the divine commands to all of creation, without exception [87]. Even evil, which at face value often seems to be a powerful, substantial, and unpredictable force pervading the earth, is not beyond the sphere of their jurisdiction. For physical evil is nothing but a privation in contingent beings subject to contrariety, [88] and thus is under the control of the angels, in so far as all contingent material beings are under their control (in this sense evil may also be said to be "caused", indirectly and *per accidens*, by the angels, similarly to the way in which it is "caused" by God [89]). And moral evils, in so far as they are expressed in the transient actions of corporeal intellective creatures, are also controlled by angels in an indirect way, that is, in so far as morally evil actions would not be possible unless angels supplied and sustained certain material conditions.

6. The influence of separate substances on intellective corporeal creatures

The question naturally arises here as to just how much influence and command separate substances have over the cognition and activities of men. St. Thomas answers this question in relation to the various areas of human activity and awareness. As regards the exterior senses, there is a twofold way in which a man may be affected by separate substances : either by being

[84] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 115, Art. 3, c. N.B. The question as to whether some of these bodies are administered by *fallen* angels, depends on the further question of whether only those inferior angels who were deputed to the care of the sphere of generable and corruptible bodies had the power to sin. If the answer to this is affirmative, then it seems that they would retain these same natural powers after their fall. If it is negative, then it would seem that God in His prescience would have seen to it that only good angels were deputed to the charge of such bodies. (Cf. *De Spir. Creat.*, ad 4 in contr.).

[85] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 110, Art. 1, c and ad 3.

[86] *In XII Metaph.*, Lect 12.

[87] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XIV, § 79.

[88] *Ibid.*, Ch. XVI, § 86, 87.

[89] *Ibid.*, Ch. XV, § 84, 85.

confronted with ready-made natural things (which can be transferred and presented by separate substances), or by undergoing an "apparition" (for example, when a separate substance re-forms natural elements into the appearance of a body). The interior senses, on the other hand, are affected by separate substances through alterations in the natural spirits and humors which actuate these senses [90]. It is in this last-mentioned manner that good and bad angels are able to cause imaginary visions in men, either with or without suspension of the activities of their exterior senses [91]. The health and disposition of a man can also be affected in a similar manner, that is, through alterations in the interior senses which can have psychosomatic repercussions [92].

The "impression" (or, in the case of the fallen angels, the obfuscation) of the human intellect is, however, the main way in which separate substances affect their fellow intellective beings. Whereas a separate substance uses force and the mere *imperium* of its will to cause changes in essentially material beings, it uses persuasion as its ordinary *modus operandi* in the case of men. This persuasion, when its source is a good angel, is called "illumination" or "inspiration"; when, on the other hand, its source is a bad angel, it is called "obfuscation" or "temptation". The technical means by which separate substances accomplish this persuasion is the impression of certain sensible representations on the imagination of man, with the intent of giving rise to ideas corresponding to these representations [93]. The two main types of ideas which the good angels strive to elicit are ideas of "*agenda*" and ideas of "*credenda*". The first type are practical representations of things to be accomplished; the second are symbolical representations of things to be believed [94]. It would seem that in proposing the second type of ideas the operation of angels is even more important and fundamental than that of the human agents – preachers, prophets, apostles, evangelists – who propose the truths of faith; since it is the angels who must illumine these human agents themselves, and touch the "inner ear" of those who hear these human agents [95]. The bad angels, of course, strive to elicit the

[90] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 111, Art. 4, c.

[91] *Ibid.*

[92] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 110, Art. 2, 1 and ad. 1.

[93] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 111, Art. 1, c. This persuasion can also take place in an indirect way, by strengthening the natural light of a man's intellect by their mere spiritual presence. Only good angels are able to produce this type of illumination.

[94] *Ibid.*, c and ad. 1.

[95] *Ibid.*, ad 1 : "Requiritur ad fidem, quod credibilia proponantur credenti. Et hoc quidem fit per hominem, secundum quod 'fides est ex auditu", ut dicitur Rom. 10, 17; sed per angelos principaliter, per quos hominibus revelantur divina".

opposite of the above two types of ideas. Their concern is to distract man from what he should do by proposing concrete goods unrelated to his final end; and to lead him to give intellectual assent to error rather than to authentic truths of faith.

G. THE HIERARCHICAL DISPOSITION OF SEPARATE SUBSTANCES ON THE BASIS OF THESE POWERS

1. The particularity of the operations of inferior separate substances as contrasted with the universality of the operations of their superiors

In discussing the opinions of Plato and Aristotle in regard to separate substances, St. Thomas in his *De Substantiis Separatis* notes two factors that are of interest to us as preliminaries to speaking of the hierarchical arrangement of separate substances, These factors are 1) the fact that there is a great gap between the perfection of the Prime Mobile and the Prime Mover of Aristotle, which would lead one to suspect that there are many intervening orders of separate substances between them [96], and 2) the fact that both Aristotle and Plato concurred in relegating the inferior orders of separate substances to the realm of contrariety, material particularity, and evil [97] .And so the findings of reason alone, as represented by these opinions of Plato and Aristotle, would lead us to believe, in a general way, that the inferior orders of angels would have to do with the particular, the material, and the changeable; while the superior orders would have to do with the more universal, and with the disposition of spiritual things (other angels).

Such opinions, says Aquinas, are bolstered by the teachings of scripture and the Fathers of the Church, which tell us that there are nine orders of angels between us and God [98], ranging from guardian angels, whose most notable task is to illumine particular men and guard them against evil, to the seraphim whose "task" is to contemplate God in the simplest and most universal way, and who never enter in any way into the realm of particular mundane affairs.

Since separate substances do not *have* forms, i.e. as that which is received in a material substratum, but rather *are* forms, i.e. separated species totally

[96] *Loc. cit.*, Ch. II, § 3, 4.
[97] *Ibid.*, Ch. III, § 17.

free from matter and quantitative divisions [99]. – it follows that they are distinguished one from another solely on the basis of formal, not material, differences [100]. One angel is not really similar to another in the same way that all men are fundamentally similar. The most we can say is that they are united with one another and are related to one another in much the same way that corporeal species are "connected" with one another and mutually dependent. This would seem to imply that there is no mere "horizontal" numbering and division of angels as there is with men, who are all on the same level of ontological perfection and are separated from one another only by their material endowments, material circumstances, proper place, qualitative perfections, and so forth. Rather there would seem to be a totally different type of numbering in the case of the angels. As St. Thomas says, they are diversified from one another merely from the fact that one angel possesses naturally one modality of *esse* but is deprived (naturally) of all the others :

> If there is any diversity among [separate substances], this would have to be according to differences in form. And in those things which differ only according to form, there is no equality whatsoever. For all such differences in form are reducible in the final analysis to a fundamental opposition; namely, that between form and the privation of form [101].

Taking for granted this unique manner of diversification, the "superior" separate substance would be that separate substance which has a higher modality of *esse*, namely, that type of modality which contains in itself many inferior modalities in a virtual or pre-eminent way, for example in the way that the hexagon contains in a virtual way the pentagon and the tetragon. We must not understand this "pre-eminent" perfection, however, in a mathematical way, as if it were a simple aggregate or sum-total of all inferior perfections (thus rendering these inferior perfections and the inferior angels in which they are found, superfluous). The eminent perfection of the angels of the highest hierarchy, for instance, only means that their active powers are naturally directed to the simplest, most universal, and most spiritual objects, although they would "theoretically" be capable of dealing with less universal objects. The seraphim might thus be compared to a con-

[98] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 108, *passim*.

[99] Cf. *De Ente*, Ch. IV.

[100] *In Libr. De Causis*, Lect. IV, Parma, p. 725.

[101] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XV, § 63 : "Si ... in eis sit aliqua diversitas, oportet quod hoc sit secundum formalem differentiam. In his autem quae formali differentia differunt aequalitas inveniri non potest. Oportet enim omnem formalem differentiam ad primam oppositionem reduci, quae est privationis ad formam".

templative hermit who has the talent to preach, the virtue of political prudence, the power of exorcising demons, and great qualities of leadership, but never gets a chance to exercise these gifts and faculties or develop them. In the same way, the seraphim does not have the joy, the distinction, the glory, which is proper to inferior angels; but rather the peculiar glory which accrues to his own purer operation. The distinction, therefore, of the higher from the lower angelic orders is not based on a simple unqualified principle that the higher orders "contain all the perfections of their inferiors, and something more".

Perhaps the most accurate way of contrasting the higher with the lower orders of separate substances is to say that in the former active potency predominates, while in the latter passive potency predominates. As St. Thomas says in the *De Ente et Essentia* [102], the highest intelligences are distinguished in that they have the most act and the least (unfulfilled) potency. In the angelic hierarchies, therefore, act and active potency are inversely proportional to the privations inherent in "negative" passive potency [103], and the relative position of a separate substance in the ladder of creation is determined solely by the qualitative amount of its active power. Thus it seems to be the case with angels as with men, that "it is better to give than to receive". The highest angels, being more richly endowed in spiritual goods, are naturally disposed to share these goods with even the most "distant" orders of angels in an indirect manner. The lower angels, having less natural perfection, are equalized with their superiors, by the greater number of impressed species with which they are endowed [104], and by the multiplicity of communications which they receive from above. But the lot of the latter is better than that of the former, precisely because these superior angels have the privilege of initiating the leveling process, of effecting the equalization [105].

2. The more universal species and more universal causality of the higher orders

As was mentioned above, we cannot scientifically categorize angelic species in the same way that we categorize species of material being, since

[102] *Loc. cit.*, Ch. IV, ad fin.

[103] Cf. *supra*, pp. 37 and 44, where it is shown that the first act is "radical" active potency and that "negative" potency is an aspect of passive potency.

[104] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, Art. 3.

[105] N.B. The differentiation of the higher from the lower angelic orders is made here on the basis of a comparison of the orders among themselves, but is ultimately based on a comparison with God, whose essence is absolutely simple and universal active potency.

we cannot become familiar with their accidental and essential differences on the basis of empirical observation [106]. However, we can say in a general way that "immateriality" is the genus common to all separate substances, and that whatever species are found within this genus are attributable to the type and degree of actuality which the immaterial substance possesses [107].

The higher actuality of the superior separate substances is best understood in terms of the greater universality which characterizes it. This universality has a twofold aspect : 1) It implies that the impressed species of the higher angels are more universal and less in number (simpler) than those of the inferior angels [108], and that their substantial form extends further in its "reach" [109], as a scope set at "infinity" comprehends more in its surveillance; and 2) it implies that the higher angels are more universal causes than the inferior angels, in that their active power extends to produce a greater ontological distance, without any "diminishment of energy" resulting from the larger proportions of their sphere of activity [110].

3. Natural and supernatural relationships among separate substances :

The separate substances, therefore, have this in common, that they are all immaterial, all intellective; they differ among themselves only in regard to the subtility of their spiritual natures, the modality of their cognition, and the comparative force of their volitional *imperium*. They would seem in this to resemble the various species of animals, which all have sensibility and locomotion in common, but which differ among themselves according to the sense power which predominates in them and the relative acuity of this sense power; and according to their relative swiftness, their brute strength, and so forth. And just as the various species of animals are complementary to one another, so also with the separate substances.

In the realm of grace, however, the separate substances are not complementary to one another in the same way that corporeal intellective creatures are. Grace in them is always proportional to natural endowments, which is not the case with men [110]. Whereas in the Church militant it can very easily happen that an illiterate peasant would be richer in grace and charity than an eminent theologian, and would consequently be able to inspire

[106] *De Ente*, Ch. V.
[107] *De Ente*, Ch. V.
[108] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, Art. 3, c.
[109] *Ibid.*,
[110] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XV, § 80.

or benefit the latter in the supernatural sphere, such an instance would be impossible among the angels. It could never happen, for example, that an archangel could be richer in grace than a cherubim, and could consequently illuminate the latter or stir him on to the heights of charity. For in the angels, who are simple, immaterial forms, there can never be any dichotomy of body and soul, or of practical and speculative intellect, or of intelligence and faith, or of natural and divine love. Angels cannot relegate one compartment of their life to supernatural activity and another to natural activity, as men often do. If they choose God as their final end, it must be a consummate choice, without reservation, encompassing in its scope the whole complexus of their natural powers and activities. And so it happens, as St. Thomas puts it, that in the realm of grace "those angels who are closer to God, are both higher in natural endowments, and more brilliant in intellect [112]".

4. The angelic order of the "powers"

We might fittingly conclude this discussion of the active powers of separate substances by considering the order of "powers" (*potestates*) in the celestial hierarchy. Just as it can be said of all the angels that they do not have virtue, but are their virtue, and that they do not have essence, but are their own essence [113], so also it might be said especially of the order of powers that they *are* power; that is, pure forms whose distinctive perfection is the manifestation of the attribute of "power" in God. If all the angels have infinite power *secundum quid* [114], this prerogative seems to belong to the order of powers in an eminently concrete way, in a way most meaningful to us, whose vantage point is the material universe, the "sphere of contrariety". For if we consult the Fathers of the Church, we find that their description of this order of the "powers" gives us, in summary form, a good description of the intellective and volitional powers of all the angels, in relation to our own situation. For Dionysius, concentrating on the intellective potency of the "powers", says that their order is distinguished by their more universal insights into the plans of divine providence, insights which

[111] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 108, Art. 4, c. "Angelis data sunt dona gratuita secundum capacitatem naturalium, quod non est in hominibus".

[112] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 106, Art. 3, ad. 1 : "Illi [angeli] qui sunt Deo propinquiores, sunt et gradu sublimiores, et scientia clariores". N.B. The "propinquity" spoken of here is "*per sanctitatem*", as St. Thomas says expressly further on in the passage.

[113] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVIII, § 98, 99.

[114] *Ibid.*, Ch. X, § 59.

apply to all the singular instances of these plans, and are applied inexorably to these singular instances [115]. Gregory, on the other hand, who seems to emphasize the volitional side of their power, says that they are the order which commands, combats, and checks evil spirits; the order through whose very glance even the princes of this world, the personified powers of darkness, are dissipated [116]. In this sense, we have in them a summary of powers attributed to all the angels, since in intellect they all are concerned with more universal principles, and apply them simply and inexorably to their concrete instances; and in will they are the pre-eminent executors of the will of God, combatting all obstacles in putting in effect God's designs for the good of the universe.

[115] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 108, Art. 6, c.
[116] *Ibid.*

IV.

THE CAPACITIES OF SEPARATE SUBSTANCES

Having examined the active powers of separate substances, we are now ready to treat of their capacities, or passive potencies.

Preliminarily to this, we should note that "passivity" has a twofold meaning. Primarily, and strictly, it is the capacity for undergoing a change in which "the material element or subject sheds one form, concomitantly to receiving the contrary of this form" [1]. In a secondary and derived sense, it is the capacity to receive "a certain fulfillment and perfection" which is not the contrary of the forms already possessed, and which therefore does not involve the loss of any of the forms possessed [2].

The first type of passivity, in which there is destruction along with perfection, is witnessed in all types of non-cognitive changes, for example in the alteration from black to white, in the change from small to large, in the substantial change from one essential type of being to another. The second type of passivity, which is in one direction only, that is, in the direction of perfection, is found to some degree in the sense faculties, but especially in the possible intellect, which is capable of unlimited perfection, and a perfection separable from time and the material adjuncts wherein it originated.

This latter type of passivity is further distinguishable into two subtypes : 1) That which renders a being capable of attaining a perfection which it does not have; and 2) that which enables a being to continually receive and possess the perfections which it already has (e.g., the already-acquired species in the case of the possible intellect).

[1] *In II De Anima*, Lect. xi, § 365 : "Abiicitur ... forma a materia vel subiecto, per introductionem contrariae formae".

[2] *Ibid.*, § 366 : "Hoc modo dicitur passio, non secundum quod fit quaedam corruptio patientis, sed magis secundum quod fit quaedam salus et perfectio eius quod est in potentia, ab eo quod est in actu".

In separate substances, as we shall see, the capacity for natural existence is of the latter type of "perfective" passivity; while the obediential capacity for justification is of the former type. The capacity for denomination in terms of corporeal places, on the other hand, would be more of a "corruptive" passivity, since a separate substance must leave one place *per accidens* in order to apply its power to another (cf. sect. D.).

A. MEANS OF INVESTIGATION OF THESE CAPACITIES

Three general means seem open to us in the investigation of the capacities of angels : introspection, analogy, and comparison to corresponding active powers.

Through introspection we find that we have a capacity for retaining (through intellectual memory) the knowledge we already have. We also find that we have a capacity for continually and without limit growing in new knowledge. If we concentrate on the former capacity, we can arrive at some idea of the natural substantial capacity of a separate substance, which is a substantial *mens* [3] continually retaining its "ready-made" perfection. If we concentrate on the latter capacity, on the other hand, we can grasp some faint idea of how an angel can "grow" in a supernatural way, i.e. through justification and supernatural knowledge.

By analogy with prime matter, which is potential to all corporeal forms, we can come to a notion of a separate form which is itself immediately receptive of actually intelligible *esse*, and the complete store of habitual species which this *esse* brings with it as proper accidents. And by analogy with the celestial bodies, which are essentially immutable but transmutable according to place, we can glean some idea of how separate substances are naturally immutable, but are transmutable 1) as regards their supernatural end, and 2) as regards the application of their active force (*virtus*) to this or that corporeal place.

Finally, by a consideration of active potency in its various aspects, we can come to some knowledge of the passive potency, or capacity, which must correspond to it. For from what we know of the active powers of a being, we can reason to a corresponding positive capacity, which must be directly proportional to the quantity of act which is received [4]. And in the case of each separate substance, this would be its own essence, which must

[3] Cf. *S. Th.*, Q. 54, Art. 3, ad 1.

[4] *S. Th.*, Suppl. ,Q. 35, Art. 3, ad 1 (ref. : *In IV Sent.*, d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, qa 3).

be a capacity corresponding to the powers which it receives. Also, from considering the active power of God, who creates these supreme intellective creatures without any pre-existing subject or material; and from considering the active power of the superior angels who in a simple and supremely universal way perfect all inferior angels through illumination, we can gain some idea of the spiritual simplicity of the substantial angelic capacity, and of the tremendous unfulfilled "negative" capacity of the inferior angels to undergo transmutation through illumination [5].

B. THE CAPACITY FOR EXISTENCE (*ESSE*) IN SEPARATE SUBSTANCES

1. The immaterial nature of this capacity

A natural and very human question that could come to mind, in discussing the peculiar being of separate substances, is "what are they composed of?" With the exception of the divine supersubstance, which is necessary and eternal, all separate substances must have some kind of a "ground" for their existence, a material cause which will lend sufficient reason to their contingent being. Is this "material cause" in the case of separate substances one and the same thing with prime matter? Some of the Fathers of the Church, e.g. Augustine and Dionysius, indicate in places that it is probable that some of the separate substances – at least the devil and his angels – were created with aereal, and therefore material, bodies [6]. Avicebron also, in his interpretation of Aristotle, sees some kind of a material "stuff", a "spiritual" matter, as a necessary substratum common to both composite and separate substances, since forms without material substrata would seem to be infinite unparticipated unities, fully actual, having no relationship or community with corporeal things [7].

The theory that certain orders of separate substances were created with aereal or etherial bodies is untenable, says St. Thomas. The reason for this is that a single element, such as air, would not be able to support life, which is the most perfect of corporeal motions in our hemisphere, and which is made possible only by the fact that the elements withdraw from

[5] Cf. *S.C.G.*, I, 43 : "Quanto potentia passiva maior praeexistit vel praeintelligitur, a tanto maiori virtute activa in actum completur".

[6] *De Subst. Sep.*, XIX, § 107.

[7] *Ibid.*, Ch. IV, *passim*.

the extremes to which they are naturally drawn, and unite their own proper motions to harmonize in some intermediate motion, which most perfectly imitates the uniform circular motion of the heavenly bodies [8]. Air, even though it is the most subtle of the elements, would not be able by itself to produce even an imperfect "working model" of this uniform circular motion, but rather would be drawn uniformly "up", to its own proper place.

Avicebron's position of a ''spiritual" matter common to all things is also refuted by St. Thomas by the following arguments : 1) A separated form, although it would not be limited from "below" by matter, would not be simply infinite, (as Avicebron alleges) since it would still be limited from "above", by its dependence, on, and ordering to, God's own infinite *esse*. 2) Separate substances, although they each are single and individual species incapable of any dichotomy between intrinsic natural potency and its corresponding act, nevertheless are not a "reproach" to the absolute unity of God (as Avicebron claimed they would be); since here is still a created multiplicity in them, in that their fulfilled potency is distinct from its participated act, and in that they are a distinct species in the genus of which they are a member. 3) Act is of a higher order than potency, and therefore is naturally prior to potency; we must not suppose, therefore, that every type of form must presuppose some type of limiting material potency, into which it must be received and gradually explicated. For even when certain types of forms are received into prime matter, this is for the sake of the matter, not of the form. 4) The fact that certain types of forms are unreceived in matter would not imply that their being is unparticipated, and without any subject; for the existent form is potential to the reception of its intelligible species and, *qua* (passive) potency, is the subject of this accidental *esse* in the fully-constituted separate substance. 5) Finally, it is not necessary to posit any material substratum to insure the continuity and community of all created things. It would even be a mistake to say that prime matter fulfills such a role in the sphere of corporeal being; since prime matter is of itself completely indefinite, and receives its ontological unity only from the unity of the individual form with which it is united. If there is order and ontological community among all created beings, this results from the similarity or diversity among forms themselves, and not from any common material element, since the material element has of itself no definite unity [9].

In answer to the objection that Holy Scripture often speaks of angels in

[8] Cf. *De Spirit. Creat.*, VII, c., ad 3, and 6° and ad 6.

[9] For these arguments, cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. VIII, *passim*; also, Ch. VII, § 33-36.

terms of corporeal figures or forms, and often even ascribes passions like concupiscence and wrath to the angels, St. Thomas answers that such descriptions are only metaphorical. The reason why Scripture speaks of angels in a corporeal way is to show that all creatures are crass and material in comparison to God. And the attribution of corporeal activities to the angels is merely an accomodation to our way of thinking, in describing the simple intellective activities of angels. An angel's "anger", for instance, is a figurative term for his "rational virility" [10].

Separate substances, therefore, are truly "spirits" in the scriptural sense, i.e. completely incorporeal [11]. While the human soul gives a specific form and intelligibility to a body, the "form" of a separate substance does not "inform" anything; rather, it is of itself completely determined and intelligible, as only a completely immaterial form can be. For immateriality is synonymous with intelligibility [12]. The only composition to be found, therefore, within a separate substance, is the composition of this simple form or essence with the *esse* which it participates [13]. These forms are therefore "informed" by a higher form, namely the *esse* which they participate from God, and in relation to which they stand as potency to act [14]. It would be most true to say, therefore, that their true reality comes from the various deiform perfections which they exemplify, and that their "form" which reflects these perfections is as passive in relationship to them as prime matter is in relationship to the substantial form with which it is united. The form of a separate substance, considered in itself is non-being [15], i.e. a pure spiritual capacity for existence, without any existence of itself.

2. *The full and immediate determination of this capacity through esse*

The essence of an angel, *qua* capacity, is very much like the special type of matter which is said to exist in the celestial bodies. This matter is, according to St. Thomas immediately ordered to pure material *esse*, which it perpetually and perfectly explicates, and which in its perfection is "formless" in the same way that light is "colorless". The essence of an angel is likewise ordered to pure immaterial *esse*, in such a way that there is no becoming process involved by which it becomes possessed of perfect existence; rather, it possesses its existence in a relatively infinite way, namely, to the fullest

[10] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVIII, § 100-101.
[11] *Ibid.*, § 98, 99.
[12] Cf. *De Ente*, Ch. V.
[13] *In Libr. De Causis*, Lect. IV, p. 725.
[14] *S. Th.*, Q. 50, Art. 2, ad 3.
[15] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. VIII, § 44.

extent of its capacity, from its very inception [16]. And if we carry the analogy a little further, the "form" according to which the fully intelligible esse of God is aeviternally reflected in a separate substance, is comparable to the actualized capacity of celestial bodies to perpetually explicate their pre-eminently perfect material *esse*.

We must beware, however, of looking upon the form or a separate substance as if it were a determinate vessel into which *esse* is poured. In the case of material things, matter is such a determinate vessel, in the sense that the form which it receives is limited and contracted by matter, and prevented by it from existing in its full intelligibility and perfection. But in immaterial things, there is no such determinate "vessel" which restricts the explication of the act which it receives. As St. Thomas says,

> In immaterial things, the determined part is not distinguishable from the determining part : but each and every separate substance is ordered of itself to a certain determinate level in the hierarchies of beings [17].

The determination of the *esse* of separate substances, therefore, does not take place through anything extrinsic to itself, which might act as a pre-existing material cause. Rather, it takes place in the same way that the determination of God's *esse* may be said to take place : i.e., by the very positive content which it has, and the concomitant negation of any addition to this positive content [18].

The specific form which a separate substance has, therefore, is just the result of the positive content of the *esse* which it participates, just as the formless brilliance of the celestial bodies is due to the quantity of inexhaustible material energy which they possess. It is the termination of this very positive content; and thus is much like the point, which must necessarily terminate a line, but which has no meaning itself except in reference to the line.

And just as the point does not have physical, but only mathematical, reality, so also the form of a separate substance has of itself no reality. It is a relative non-being, which results from the determination and limitation of *esse* to this or that mode of expressing, extending, exteriorizing some perfections of the infinite divine *esse*. And thus the *esse* itself, by

[16] *Ibid.*, § 41; also, *S. Th.*, I, Q. 50, Art. 2, ad. 4.

[17] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 50, Art. 2, ad. 1 : "In rebus immaterialibus, non est aliud determinans et determinatum : sed unaquaeque earum secundum seipsam tenet determinatum gradum in entibus".

[18] *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2, c.

being transcendentally related to this or that mode or determination, creates a positive capacity from *nihil subjecti.*

The *esse* of a separate substance and its form thus have an irrevocable and irreducible relationship to one another. And we must say that neither the "determined" *esse* nor the "determined" essence could have any intelligibility or reality, except in terms of this relationship. To use an example, they are related to each other in much the same way that the end of a linear grouping of houses is related to the end house of that group : if the end house were removed, it would no longer be the *end* house, and the end of the group would no longer be the *locus* of that end house.

3. The mode of creation in the case of separate substances

The Catholic faith teaches, says St. Thomas [19], that all creatures have been produced by God from nothing. That is to say, there is a natural succession in all creatures of the being which they now have, to the non-being which they "once" had. In the case of the separate substances, in which by definition there is no pre-existing matter which can be re-disposed through physical motions to take on other forms, the production of the individual must be immediately by God. As St. Thomas says,

> Since ... the production [of a separate substance] is not caused through physical motion, it must be caused by the creation of the very nature of the separate substance. And thus it is necessary that, in ascertaining the cause of this production, we turn our attention to that which is the cause *per se* of the nature itself, rather than to some being which participates the specific nature in a particular way [20].

The creation of a separate substance therefore must be something like the creation of "ungenerable and incorruptible" celestial bodies. In both cases, it must take place *ex nihilo sui et subjecti* [21]. While the production of a plant or an animal or the body of a man takes place in time out of a pre-existing material subject, the production of a separate substance can never take place in such a way, but must always be a distinct creation. It is thus God Himself who must bridge the gap between His unparticipated *esse* and the nothingness of a separate substance, without the aid of any secondary causes, and cause it to exist veridically.

[19] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 61, Art. 2, c.

[20] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. X, § 58 : "Cum ... non per motum causatur, talis productio est ipsius naturae secundum seipsam. Oportet igitur quod reducatur in id quod est per se causa illius naturae, non autem in aliquid quod particulariter illam naturam participet".

[21] *Ibid.*, § 56.

In creating a separate substance, however, God does not generate it as an effect of His nature, i.e. by being the efficient cause of another being similar to Himself in a "horizontal" way. While material beings, as *hoc tale's*, of their very nature produce other determinate beings similar to themselves, God, who is *Ipsum Ens*, could not by His sole nature generate anything except another indeterminate and infinite being (which would be impossible). And so it is that His intellect must "intervene", as a measuring and limiting principle, to insure the very finiteness and "*taleitas*" of creatures [22]. The production of a separate substance is thus more comparable to the production of an artifact by an artist than to the generation of one being by another with the same specific nature.

In Chapter X of the *De Substantiis Separatis*, in refuting the doctrine of Avicenna that all inferior separate substances were produced mediately through the "first intelligence" St. Thomas, after noting that secondary causes cannot produce anything except from a pre-existing subject, says that it is God Himself who must create something in separate substances which is proportional to matter, and which could thus supply the basis upon which a separate substance is brought from the state of nothingness to the state of existence. This proportional material element is the first and proper effect of God Himself; and would seem indeed to be the seminal, substantial being which the separate substance receives, which it shares in greater or lesser degree with all beings, and which is compared to all further accidental determinations as potency to act [23].

This substantial being, although it is accidentally undetermined, is substantially determinate, since, as we have seen [24], there are no separate determining and determined parts in a separate substance. And the very positive determination which this limited substantial *esse* sets up would seem to constitute, in the case of separate substances, their positive capacity for existence. Needless to say, the "positive capacity" in this case is a long way

[22] *S. Th.*, Q. 19, Art. 4, c. and ad 2.

[23] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. X, § 56, 57 ; "Sicut ... cum per motum aliquid fit per se ens hoc, effectus hujusmodi in particularem causam reducitur quae ad determinatam formam movet; ita etiam cum simpliciter fit ens per se et non per accidens oportet hunc effectum reduci in universalem essendi causam..." "Oportet igitur id quod primum subsistit in unoquoque sicut in corporibus materia et immaterialibus substantiis quod proportionale est, sit proprius effectus primae virtutis universalis agentis". N.B. Although "id quod proportionale est materiae" might also seem to refer to the angelic essence as potential and material to esse, in the context of this chapter as a whole it could only refer primarily to the substantial esse, which is potential to accidental esse.

[24] Cf. *supra*, p. 78.

removed from the passive potency of prime matter. In fact, in comparison to the latter, it seems active rather than passive. However, considered in itself, it is passive and potential to the *esse* by which it is determined.

4. The durational context of this capacity

If we consider the infusion of *esse* to the angelic essence from the point of origin, namely, from the locus of God, this influx of *esse* can be called instantaneous and unchanging, in that it proceeds from the one Being in whom there can never be any change or movement. As St. Thomas puts it,

> Where the action of the efficacious cause [*influentis*] takes place without motion the agent does not require to be disposed so that at some moment it would be able to act, after being unable to act : for even this would be an alteration of sorts. And so this type of agent would be able to act perpetually by its efficacious influx. ... And such a type of influx is found to a certain extent even in corporeal things [i.e., in the instantaneity of illumination of diaphana by light]. ... But it is much more evident in the case of intellectual things, which are the furthest removed from the exigencies of motion [25].

And thus the influx of *esse* from God is like the influx of the sun, which causes motion and time, but is itself unmeasurable by solar time, no matter what may be the age of the hemisphere which it illuminates. So also, when God infuses *esse* to pure intellective creatures, His constant creative influx is itself unmeasurable in terms of any created duration [26].

If, however, we consider the angelic essence in itself, we perceive a peculiar type of duration which is proper to their essence, and is midway between time and eternity, to the same degree that their essential capacity is midway between the passive potency of matter and the active potency of God [27]. For just as their creation was not conditioned by any prerequisites of time or place [28], so also their duration is apportioned out to them solely and directly through the intellect and will of God, who causes participation in His existence according to determinate measure, while He Himself contains all these determinate measures in a comprehensive and preeminent way [29].

[25] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. IX, § 51, 52 : "Si ... actio influentis sine motu exstiterit non accedit agenti dispositio ut postmodum possit agere, cum prius non potuerit, quia jam haec mutatio quaedam esset. Potuit igitur semper agere influendo ... Et hoc quidam aliqualiter apparet in corporalibus rebus. ... Sed expressius ... videtur in intellectualibus rebus quae sunt magis remotae a motu".

[26] Cf. *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*, Ch. XVII, § 94; *S. Th.*, I, Q. 61, Art. 2, ad. 2.

[28] *Ibid.*, Ch. IX, § 5.

[29] *Ibid.*, § 52.

This special type of duration, by which spiritual substances are measured, is called an "aevum" or "aeviternity" [30]. This type of duration is applicable not only to the angelic substance itself, but also to all the operations which are proper to that substance [31]. And so we must say that even in regard to those operations which seem to our mind to involve a definite temporal progression – e.g. the decision of a separate substance in regard to its final end – such operations are not only "swifter" than any temporal movements, but are truly outside of time, and measured only by the proper duration of the individual separate substance concerned [32]. And we must also conclude that there is a gradation among the types of duration accruing to separate substances, so that the supreme good angel approximates the simple and unchanging eternal operation of God [33].

And thus separate substances participate in a way in the eternity of God, but are properly and particularly measured by their own aeviternity. And in this they seem to have something in common with man, who in his spiritual nature is constituted outside of time, but in his corporeal nature and operations is subject to, and measured by, time. Separate substances, therefore, considered from the side of their immaterial potency, are measured by aeviternity; and men, considered from the side of their strictly passive potency, are measured by time. There is a difference, however, in the two types of "potential" duration. For the angelic potency, which is not just a relationship to *esse*, but also the means by which its *esse* is received [34], is a fully actuated receptacle, and does not have any potency "left over", either for being or for non-being, except in a purely extrinsic way. Man, on the other hand, in so far as he has potency for perfection and change, has a proportional and concomitant potency for imperfection and dissolution [35]. And thus the temporal duration of man carries with it possibility of dissolution, while the aeviternal duration of a separate substance has no capacity for dissolution [36] (except, of course, with regard to the absolute power of God).

The question as to the durational relationship of the creation of the angels to the creation of the material world depends on the further question, says St. Thomas, as to whether the account of creation in *Genesis* is to be taken literally or spiritually. St. Augustine, who interprets the six days of

[30] *Quodlibeta*, V, Art. VII, c.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XIX, § 113.
[33] *Quodlibeta*, V, Art. VII, c.
[34] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 41, Art. 6, ad 1.
[35] *S.C.G.*, I, Ch. 16, Leonine, T. XIII, p. 44.
[36] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 104, Art. 4, c.

creation as referring to a more spiritual or metaphysical type of duration than the terrestrial day, is led logically to posit the coincidence of the two creations. For Augustine, each "day" of creation represents a different genus of perfection accruing to the angelic intelligence itself, as a result of its creation from nothingness. And so the perfection of the angels as individually existent beings would seem to have taken place on the fourth "day", on which, it is said, the sun, moon, and stars (which would seem to refer figuratively to the subsistent angelic intelligences) were finally formed. Jerome, Gregory Nanzianzen, and John Damascene, on the other hand, interpret the six days of *Genesis* in a more literal sense. And consistently with this view, they generally posit the creation of the angels as naturally prior to corporeal creation, and as having taken place not in any "empyreal heaven", but only in a spiritual state or "place" of intellective clarity [37].

5. The aeviternal angelic substance as the cause of temporal motions

Whichever of these latter views is adopted as to the durational relationship of the creation of separate substances to the creation of the world, we might ask how it is that a being which is essentially constituted outside of time can have any causal efficacy in the production of the temporal progressions in the universe.

Primarily and especially, as we have seen above [38], the determinations and temporal progressions of the universe are dependent on separate substances as final causes, in so far as they directly or indirectly cause all purely corporeal movements through appetition. For while God must create the *esse* of the "prime locomotion", it is the separate substances which must direct it and determine it to its particular effects in time and space.

Secondly, separate substances would seem to exert a quasi-exemplary causality on the individual existence of material things, in so far as

> ... the creatures which have pre-existed in the *Verbum Dei* from all eternity, have been explicated in a twofold manner; firstly, in the angelic intellect; and secondly, in their own proper subsistent natures [39].

Granted that this is so, there would seem to be a certain natural precedence of the being which material things have in the angelic mind, to the being which they have *in rerum natura*. And while the more universal know-

[37] For these two types of interpretations, cf. *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVII, § 95-97.

[38] Cf. *supra*, p. 52, 63 f.

[39] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 56, Art. 2, c. : "Ea quae in Verbo Dei ab aeterno praeextiterunt, dupliciter ab eo effluxerunt : uno modo, in intellectum angelicum; alio modo, ut subsisterent in propriis naturis".

ledge which angels have of material things would not be the cause of these things in the strict sense [40], it would nevertheless be true to say that all material things would have to pre-exist in some way in the angelic mind, subordinately to the way in which they pre-exist in the *Verbum Divinum*, which is the true exemplary cause of all things.

Lastly, if it is true, as some claim, that the fall of the bad angels was the occasion for the creation of material intellective creatures to "fill up the vacated places", then we might say that the fall of these angels rendered the creation of the world even more fitting and useful [41]. And thus we might say that in a very subsidiary way they were indirect and negative "causes" of man's creation. However, their fall could never be the prime reason and condition for the creation of man, since God as creator is not passively influenced or conditioned by the actions of any of His creatures, but controls all of them actively.

6. *Individuation and multiplication of separate substances on the basis of their substantial capacity*

In the physical world, matter is the ordinary cause of the individuation and multiplication of things. In separate substances, however, there is no matter; and thus they manifestly cannot be multiplied in the quantitative and mathematical way that material things are. If they are to be individuated and multiplied, therefore, this must come about in a way different from the manner in which it takes place in material things. There is, however, no contradiction involved in this possibility, St. Thomas tells us, any more than there would be a contradiction involved in the fact that a body which is naturally heavy is temporarily on top of that which is naturally light [42].

Just how, then, does the individuation of separate substances take place? St. Thomas responds that separate substances

> ... are not individuated by means of matter, but rather from the very fact that they are not created to exist in another, and as a consequence cannot be participated by a multitude [43].

[40] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 55, Art. 3, ad. 1.

[41] Cf. *In II Sent.*, I, text of Peter Lombard; also, *ibid.*, III, q. 2, a. 1, ad. 3.

[42] *De Unitate Intellectus*, p. 63-64. This should not be taken as implying that the multiplication of separate substances is just a temporary and, as it were, unnatural state, like the elevated position of a naturally heavy body; but rather, as a mere illustration to show that there is no more contradiction involved in the one sense than in the other.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 63 : "... non individuantur ex materia, sed ex hoc ipso quod non sunt natae in alio esse, et per consequens nec participari a multis".

In other words, a separate substance, by the very fact that it possesses a unique existence in itself is prevented from sharing this existence with a multitude of other entities in such a way that these other entities could, as a consequence, attribute to themselves that unique existence which that separate substance boasts. And thus they differ from purely material things, whose existence must be received and determined and individuated in matter, by means of the substantial form.

A separate substance, therefore, unlike a material substance, is diversified and individuated on the basis of its formal unicity, i.e. from the fact that it has a unique form which is not able to be shared or possessed by others. And the formal differences which supply the basis for the diversification of angels must be substantial differences, not accidental differences. For example, the differences in the alacrity of the movement of the angelic wills toward God at creation could not supply any basis for their diversification among themselves, contrary to the opinion of Origen [44].

The fact of the substantial diversity and variety of subsistent forms is itself attributable mainly to the variability and multiplicability of participation. As St. Thomas explains it,

> It must be noted that in the divine wisdom there are ideas to which all things correspond – exemplary forms, residing in the divine mind. And these forms, although they are multiplied if we consider them on the side of creatures, nevertheless are not really distinct from the divine essence, in that the likeness of this divine essence is participable in diverse ways by diverse creatures [45].

If we would gain some idea of the almost infinite number of ways in which the divine essence can be participated by separate substances, St. Thomas advises us to avert to the way that possible intellects are diversified and capable of diverse actuations, among men [46]. Just as each possible intellect has a different fundamental orientation according to the individual in which it is found, and is able to pursue its perfection in an infinite variety of seemingly arbitrary ways, so also subsistent forms are diversified and multiplied in an almost infinite variety of ways, according to the determination of their essence, and the *esse* to which it is related transcendentally.

[44] *De Subst. Sep.*, § 62, 63.

[45] *S. Th.*, Q. 44, Art. 3, c. : "Oportet dicere quod in divina sapientia sunt rationes omnium rerum : quas supra diximus ideas, id est formas exemplares in mente divina existentes. Quae quidem, licet multiplicentur secundum respectum ad res, tamen non sunt realiter aliud a divina essentia, prout eius similitudo a diversis participari potest diversimodo".

[46] *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, 3, c.

The separate substances are individuated and multiplied in a non-mathematical way, therefore, according solely to the ontological status of their essence and its relationship to other essences. They are in a different realm, a universe different from the material universe, which is invisible to us who are incapable of perceiving form in its pure state, but which is real nevertheless. And just as the number and variety of heavenly bodies, which are free from the limitations of terrestrial matter, is immensely greater than that of terrestrial bodies; so also the number and variety of separate substances, which are free from all material determinations, would seem to be proportionally greater, so as to immensely exceed all corporeal multiplicity [47].

C. THE CAPACITY FOR JUSTIFICATION IN SEPARATE SUBSTANCES

1. The capacity for choosing or rejecting a supernatural end

Since we human beings are essentially and accidentally multipartite, and work out our perfection in a material and temporal way, and are subject to authorities in many spheres, it is necessary that we should be governed by a multiplicity of laws. In the realm of grace, there are a multiplicity of laws governing what we must believe and what supernatural operations we must perform, in order to arrive at a supernatural goal. In the realm of nature, we are subject to many laws, and are required to perform various moral activities, in accordance with the different appetites and parts of man, and the various relationships which he has with the outside world. Finally, in the realm of civil and ecclesiastical society, we are governed by numerous positive laws, necessary in a greater or less degree for the proper functioning and ordering of mankind as a group.

If these laws seem bewildering or onerous at times, it is only because we have found it somewhat difficult to subordinate the positive to the natural, and the natural to the supernatural laws; or because we are waylayed by "passions" or external influences. However, if we were to consider what life would be like without such a multiplicity of laws, we might realize their usefulness for us. For, because of the very multiplicity existing in man *and* mankind, he needs many laws (implicit or explicit) to achieve the fullest happiness. In fact, without any laws he would be paralyzed in activity; just as he could never grow in knowledge without a multiplicity of sensations and of operations of the imagination. And so it is that for the most part he "feels at home" amid such laws, and takes them for granted.

[47] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 50, Art. 3, c.

With separate substances, on the other hand, there can be no such multiplicity of laws. In nature, they are created complete and perfect, so that laws governing the attainment of natural perfection would be superfluous. In hierarchical arrangement among themselves they are also perfect, since they need not be ordered to individual perfection through any kind of "political" society, nor are there natural passions or selfish tendencies, which would have to be controlled by appropriate laws and sanctions. In other words, in the realms of individual nature and social arrangement, there is no passive potency in the strict sense, and therefore there need be no laws in these realms to govern the attainment of perfection through change.

However, if we consider the fully constituted separate substance at its creation, and make allowance for the fact that there can be nothing like temporal transition in such a substance, we can detect a moment or an aspect of its being, at or through which it would be enabled to undergo a transition in its own aeviternal way : Having been set up as demigods completely active, autonomous and perfect in knowledge and operation, they could be asked to subordinate themselves to a higher order; that is, to sacrifice and die to their own proper activity, and allow the Creator Himself to live and act in them in a higher, mysterious way. To put aside their own natural actuality, and become "passive" in respect to a supernatural actuality – this is the one way they could undergo any true transition, and therefore this is the one "law" which could have been promulgated in their regard. Scripture implies such a law *was* promulgated for them: they were required to order themselves to a supernatural end, to the passive beatific vision of God [48], and to the passively initiated activity which would result simply and spontaneously from that vision.

Although a separate substance cannot suffer or "bear a cross" in the usual sense, its obedience to this law, and its reception of the beatific vision as its final end, involved a certain difficulty for each separate substance, precisely because it was outside the ambit of its natural activity [49]. And indeed it is the only example in separate substances of true passivity, i.e. passive potency in the strict sense, as involving change to some contrary state [50].

Granted that separate substances were faced with this one and ultimate choice of choosing or rejecting a supernatural end, some problems immediat-

[48] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 62, Art. 1, c.

[49] *Ibid.*, Art. 2, ad 2.

[50] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 9, Art. 2, c. St. Thomas also mentions in this text the passive potency for application of power to different places; but as we shall show below, he clarifies

ely confront us, and these are enumerated by St. Thomas in Chapter 19 of his *De Substantiis Separatis* [51]. 1) If the separate substances are pure intellects without bodies of any sort, then there can be no adverse appetites in them to war against their adherence to God. 2) The intellect of a separate substance cannot be deceived by mistaking an apparent good for a real good, since it is simply and naturally ordered to *bonum per se*, i.e. intelligible good itself. 3) There can be in them no passage of time, during which such a decision could be made, since a pure intellect is in itself constituted outside of time. 4) Finally, just as the celestial bodies are immune from contrariety and corruption, pure spiritual substances would seem to be naturally infallible in their perceptions, and thus rendered immune from being misled or "corrupted" by any disorderly affections.

In face of such difficulties, some Doctors of the Church (e.g. Augustine, Damascene, Origen, and Dionysius) have conjectured that the separate substances who rejected their supernatural end (the fallen angels) were from those inferior orders of spirits which were appointed to the spheres of corporeal operations and contrariety; and perhaps (as is conjectured by Augustine and Dionysius in places) even had bodies of air, incorruptible and yet still capable of disorderly movements, or of something analogous to evil passions [52].

In commenting on these opinions in the *De Substantiis Separatis* (which seems to be chronologically his last exposition on the topic [53], St. Thomas does not offer a definitive solution to this problem. He merely says that, even if all the fallen angels were of this description, it would not seem logical that all the members of their inferior "species" fell. For in our own human

this "local transmutability" in other places as being a potency predicable only *per accidens* of separate substances. N.B. It might be objected that choice of a supernatural end was not the only law that God could have imposed on separate substances; He could have required them to choose a natural end. But this does not seem to be possible, since as we have shown, separate substances were created in perfect possession of their true natural end. If it be objected that, unless they were allowed to make such a decision (on the hypothesis that they were relegated to a purely "natural" order), they would not seem to have the freedom which belongs to intelligent agents – this objection would not be valid. For the fact that they do not receive the chance to exercise their freedom in this ultimate and momentous way, does not imply necessarily that they do not have any freedom.

[51] *Loc. cit.*, § 111-114.

[52] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. 19, § 107-110.

[53] Cf. e.g. V.J. Bourke, who in his *Introduction to the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas* (pp. xiii-xiv), places the date of the *De Subst. Sep.* at 1272-73, while he gives the date of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa* (in which is contained the major portion of the doctrine on the angels in that work) at 1266, and the date of the *De Spirit. Creat.* at 1266-1269. Eschmann sets the date of *De Subst. Sep.* at 1270.

species we find that the tendency to evil passions does not exist equally in all men; in fact, there seem to be some men who are totally exempt from this or that evil passion. And therefore we would be led to suspect that an analogous situation would be found in such a species of inferior aereal spirits : that is to say, they would not all be equally affected by the evil passion in respect to their final end. And thus we must conclude that, if there is such an order of spirits from which the devils had their origin, then

not all of them were bad, nor were the bad ones always bad; but rather a part of them became bad through following the inclination of their passions by their own free will [54].

In earlier works, however, St. Thomas, without admitting the possibility of any such quasi-corporeal passions in the bad angels, ascribes their ability to sin to the possibility of a certain disorder existing in their naturally good operations. With regard to their contemplative life in general they can alter the voluntariness of their relationship to the act to which they are ordered as intelligent beings [55]; and with regard to their consideration of this or that *per se* good natural species, they can fail to refer this in the proper way to the divine will, or to consider it under the influence of the promptings or impulses of supernatural love [56]. In the sphere of the active life, there could be a certain disorder existing in the series of particular operations, a disorder which would be theoretically possible even in the case of the highest angels who were situated at the vestibule of the presence of the Holy Trinity; and such disorders in operation would be equivalent to evil dispositions preventing them from receiving complete and final confirmation in grace [57].

As to the question of whether the superior orders of angels (e.g. the cherubim and seraphim) could sin, we are faced with a paradox of sorts. For on the one hand, they would be less prone to sin, since they would be established so close to their immutable and infinitely good God; but on the other hand, they would have the greater motive for sin, since they would have a greater excellence and spiritual clarity, which would naturally offer the occasion for the supreme sin of pride in a subsistent intelligence.

In order to give a final adjudication on the question of whether Satan and his angels could have come from the superior orders, one would perhaps

[54] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. XIX, § 108. Note that St. Thomas seems to leave it undetermined here as to just how "*passio*" should be taken – i.e. as to what kind of a capacity for change it implies in separate substances.

[55] Cf. *In Job*, 4, Lect. 3, med.

[56] *S. Th.*, Q. 63, Art. 1, ad. 1, ad. 3, ad. 4.

[57] *In Job*, 4, Lect. 3, med.

first have to solve the larger problems of the nature of "efficacious" grace, and of just how efficacious grace is communicated to completely simple spiritual substances, and on what basis. Why does God choose to give efficacious grace to one angel, and not to another? How can there be any "disorder" in such a simple being? St. Thomas in general seems to hold to the Aristotelian position that the subordinate prime movers must be immobile and therefore completely incorporeal. However, in positing the absolute and unequivocal incorporeality of such beings, he, and we, are faced with the mystery of divine grace in their regard. And perhaps this is the reason why he does not offer a definitive solution to the question in his *De substantiis Separatis*, but is content to mention with deference the opinions of some of the Doctors of the Church, while pointing out at the same time the difficulties or mysteries that arise from the Aristotelian-based doctrine on separate substances.

At any rate, from whatever orders the fallen angels came, and however it was that they were enabled to make their choice in accord with their simple spiritual nature, we must conclude that, once the choice was made, it was irrevocable. Once a separate substance has chosen its end, it attains to its final end, and not just an intermediate end; and attains to it immediately, without any step-by-step transition. Thus there can be no second chance, no change of heart, no backtracking, for a separate substance. And just as the good angels exist and operate in virtue of their end, namely God, as supernaturally revealed; so also the devils exist and operate in virtue of the end they have chosen, namely themselves, in their finite excellence, in their radical nothingness. And so, even though they are impelled to jealously roam the world to tempt men to choose the same fate – and do so with apparent freedom – they are never free from the torment caused by the loss of all good because of enchantment with their own contingent excellence [58].

2. The capacity for supernatural knowledge

As we have seen above [59], the illumination of inferior separate substances on the part of superior separate substances is the result of an active potency in the superior angels. It is a continuous "giving", a continuous communication of the more exalted insights which they have by nature and grace.

But if we consider this illumination on the side of the inferior separate substances who receive it, we find that it involves change and perfection in

[58] *S. Th.*, Q. 64, Art. 4, ad. 3.

[59] Cf. *supra*, p. 61 ff.

these inferior separate substances, and therefore presupposes an accidental passive potency in the realm of knowledge. For while it is true that separate substances are complete and perfect in natural knowledge, and have no possible intellect as regards their knowledge of other separate substances and of material things; still, they may be said to have a quasi-possible intellect as regards the communications which they receive from above [60].

In his *De Veritate* [61], St. Thomas gives the following account of the genesis and nature of the capacity for being illuminated, which is found in all inferior separate substances [62] :

In the case of the intellectual illumination of man, we find that there are two prerequisites : 1) something external and objective must be accommodated to his intellect (analogously to the way that extended matter is accommodated to his sense of sight through illumination by material light); and 2) the internal power to assimilate this object to our intellect (which is analogous to the participated material light in the eye, which makes the sensation of sight possible). And thus, as regards man's natural knowledge, his illumination is caused by 1) the spiritualization of phantasms; and 2) the assimilation of these phantasms through the "vigor" of the agent intellect. In separate substances, however, the "natural" illumination is already complete, since 1) their knowledge comes completely from within and 2) their habitual species are completely lucid to their intellect from the instant of their creation. Therefore the only way that a separate substance could possibly receive any illumination is in regard to those things which it does not know directly, but only by way of analogy with its own nature, namely, God and superior separate substances. With respect to these superior objects of knowledge, the intellect of a separate substance is "in potency", somewhat after the manner that the possible intellect in man is in potency to complete natural knowledge. However, in the case of the angels, there is a difference, in that 1) the supernatural truths that they receive are not presented through sensible symbols; and 2) there is no ratiocinative process involved in the assimilation of such truths. Therefore they are illuminated as to these higher truths through a combination of 1)

[60] Cf. *In II Sent.*, d. 3, q. 1, a. 6, c. where St. Thomas says without qualification that the angelic intelligence is "possible" with reference to superior angels and God. In the *Summa*, I, Q. 54, Art. 4, ad. 2, however, he states that they do not have a possible intellect in the strict and univocal sense. And since this would seem to represent his final opinion on the question, it would seem best to term the angelic intellect "quasi-possible" in regard to such illuminations.

[61] *De Ver.*, Q. IX, a. 1, c.

[62] In the highest separate substance, of course, such a capacity would exist only with reference to illumination received from God Himself.

an intuitive "contiguity" (*continuatio*) of their intellect with the intellective expression of a higher intellect, and 2) reinforcement of their own intellective light by means of the light of the higher separate substance, which the inferior separate substance participates in, by "approximation" to it.

And thus the capacity of a separate substance to receive illuminations from above would be like that which an unbeliever, hypothetically perfect in natural knowledge, would have for 1) hearing the truths of faith through preachers, through reading the scriptures, and so forth; and 2) giving assent to these truths on impetus from the light of faith. And thus in addition to the natural knowledge this hypothetical unbeliever would have of corporeal natures and the analogical knowledge he would have of other things, he would have a capacity for supernatural knowledge of God and the angels and the divine plans for the universe.

The case of the separate substances would differ somewhat from the example we have given, however, in that 1) some of their "supernatural" knowledge would be "supernatural" only in the wide sense, that is, in the same way that the knowledge which the scientist transmits to the doctor who has no capacity for scientific investigation and takes such knowledge "on faith", would be supernatural; and in the same way that the knowledge which the philosopher transmits to the scientist who has no capacity for metaphysical speculation and relies on the philosopher to supply him with the proper directive principles, would be supernatural [63]; and 2) unlike the unbeliever, the separate substances who are glorified and beatified could perceive such higher truths, not just through the light of faith, but through the light of glory, by which their knowledge of these higher truths is rendered connatural, as it were.

The capacity of a separate substance for knowledge, therefore, is not a capacity for new knowledge about things which were only potentially intelligible previously, but rather a capacity for new insights into things which were actually intelligible before, but only by way of analogy with their own nature and infused species [64]. In other words, a separate substance cannot pass from potency to act as far as its natural knowledge is concerned, but only from actual natural knowledge to actual supernatural knowledge, through the obediential potency of its own natural intellective capacity. And thus we must conclude, says St. Thomas, that

> ... the illumination which one angel transmits to another is not with reference

[63] St. Thomas uses this example in explaining hierarchical angelic illumination, in *De Ver.*, Q. IX, a. 1, ad. 3.

[64] *De Ver.*, Q. IX, a. 1, ad. 8.

to those things which are in the province of natural cognition ... but rather ... with reference to those things which are revealed to them which are beyond the scope of their natural cognition : for example, with reference to the divine mysteries pertaining to the celestial and terrestrial church [65].

The question naturally arises : How can separate substances grow as regards supernatural cognition, if their intellect cannot grow as regards the number of their naturally infused species? St. Thomas answers this by noting that the way a separate substance knows by means of its species is analogous to the way that the human intellect knows by means of its phantasms. Just as the phantasms in man are not the objects of his knowledge, but rather the means by which he can proceed to know innumerable objects; so also the possible insights of a separate substance are not limited to the number of its infused species. And so a separate substance can grow in supernatural knowledge when the natural illumination of its infused species is reinforced from above, just as a man, re-examining the phantasms which he already has with the help of a special illumination from God or the angels, can grow in the supernatural knowledge proportional to this terrestrial condition [66].

And thus, while the capacity for existence in separate substances has been fulfilled from the time of their creation, and their capacity for justification has been fulfilled (in the case of the good angels) since the instant they chose God as their final end, their capacity for supernatural knowledge is continually being fulfilled, according to their own aeviternal mode of progression. That is to say, by being reinforced by the light of superior separate substances, they are enabled to perceive more clearly the nature of God, His attributes and providence, and to perceive the natural and supernatural objects of angelic knowledge in the higher way that the superior separate substances perceive them.

The devils, on the other hand, just as they have forfeited their capacity for justification, have forfeited their right to such supernatural illuminations. They are only in a position to come to a certain abstract, speculative knowledge of supernatural truths by observing the effects of divine providence, or through revelations from good angels when such revelations are deemed necessary for the good of the universe as a whole [67].

[65] *Ibid.*, ad. 9 : "Illuminatio qua unus angelus alium illuminat non est de his quae ad naturalem cognitionem pertinent ... sed ... de his quae revelantur Angelis, earum cognitionem naturalem excedentibus; sicut de divinis mysteriis pertinentibus ad Ecclesiam superiorem et inferiorem".

[66] Cf. *De Ver.*, Q. IX, a. 1, ad. 10.

[67] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 64, Art. 1, c.

D. THE CAPACITY FOR LOCAL TRANSMUTABILITY IN SEPARATE SUBSTANCES

As we have seen, the capacity for existence in separate substances is a true capacity which must be pre-understood to understand the existence itself of a separate substance; and the capacity for justification and for supernatural knowledge is also a true capacity, an obediential potency in the angelic nature itself, making it capable of higher perfection. The capacity for locomotion in separate substances, on the other hand, would not seem to be a true capacity predicable of the individual separate substances. And the reason for this is that separate substances, as purely spiritual beings, are by their very nature constituted outside of corporeal place [68]. The only "motions" that can be properly attributed to them would seem to be the purely spiritual motions of circular, oblique, and direct contemplation, which as we have seen [69], are the results of their active powers of intellection and volition.

However, although separate substances are intrinsically immovable as regards corporeal place, it is obvious from Scripture and elsewhere that there must be in their regard some kind of "application of power" to this or that place. And in so far as a separate substance can apply its power successively to different places, it would seem that we should posit in it some capacity for change in this regard. A difficulty arises, however, in that the separate substance, as a completely incorporeal being, has no capacity for acquiring any natural perfection; that is to say, if there is any motion in a separate substance, it cannot be the "actuation of something existing in potency", as it is in the case of corporeal creatures. And thus we must say that this "application of power" to different places by a separate substance must be a manifestation of the only type of motion that can exist in such a being, namely, the "actuation of a being existing in act "[70].

St. Thomas solves the paradox between the facts that a separate substance is fully actual and yet seems to undergo some transition in transferring its power from place to place, by showing that "locomotion" is predicated in a special sense in the case of purely spiritual creatures. They cannot undergo motion *per se*, as corporeal creatures can. They cannot even be moved

[68] *De subst. Sep.*, Ch. XVIII, § 102.

[69] Cf. *supra*, pp. 59, 61.

[70] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 53. Art. 2, ad. 2.

per accidens in the way that the human soul can, as something spiritual which is intrinsically related to something corporeal. If they are moved *per accidens*, then, this is *ratione mobilis*, that is, by reason of the objective movement which they cause [71]. The "capacity" for change of place in a separate substance, then, is more properly the active power in separate substances for direct ministration to creatures, and is truly a "capacity" only on the side of the corporeal creatures which are capable of being affected by separate substances. Thus it involves a merely extrinsic relationship in separate substances to corporeal things, in the same way that God's relationship to all things as "creator" is a purely extrinsic relationship, and implies no change in God Himself.

Separate substances, then, as purely spiritual creatures, could only have, and be perfected by, a spiritual place, and this seems to be the sense in which many of the Doctors of the Church attribute to them, metaphorically, a spiritual state of clarity or "light" [72]. As we have seen, this would be nothing else than the ontological relationship that these pure forms have to one another, and the spiritual illuminations which they receive because of their ontological relationship to their superiors.

There are also some Doctors of the Church, however, who have attributed to the separate substances what would seem to be a natural physical place, namely the light of the empyreal heaven [73]. How are we to take such references? If the place in such a case is not to be taken as a purely accidental attribution, *ratione mobilis*, then the problem might be solved by noting that, in the Thomistic formulation, light is neither a body nor the motion of a body [74]. It does not seem to be in any one of the predicaments applicable to generable and corruptible bodies. It is indeed the peculiar and proper quality of the unchangeable celestial bodies [75]. And for this reason light

[71] Cf. *De Spirit. Creat.*, VI, ad. 9.

[72] *De Subst., Sep.* Ch. XVII, § 97.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] *In II De Anima*, Lect. xiv, § 414, 420, 422.

[75] St. Thomas frequently speaks of light as a kind of spiritual quality. Cf. e.g. *In X Ethic.*, Lect. vii, where he says that sight is the most spiritual of the sense powers, "et ex parte objecti ... et ex parte medii [diaphani] quod sola spirituali transformatione immutatur". N.B. *medium* in the above text would not seem to refer to the sense organ, because 1) Thomas speaks of the medium as extrinsic a few lines further; 2) the sense organs undergo corporeal mutations, i.e. motions in the strict sense, as well as intentional union; 3) *spiritualis* in the above context could not refer to the intentional immutation of the organ of sight, since all the senses would be equally "spiritual" in this sense, and there would be nothing unique in the fact that the sense of sight underwent such "spiritual" transformation.

would seem to be a quasi-spiritual perfection, i.e. the act of that which is perfect, rather than of that which is imperfect. If light is not a physical motion, and the production of light does not involve a physical motion, and the state of light is not a corporeal place, then it would seem consonant with the nature of a spiritual substance that it could exist in a state of light, and have light predicated of it as a proper perfection, as the *actus perfecti.*

At any rate, whatever may be the properly predicable place or state of a separate substance, the physical places to which it applies its power at one time or another are only attributable to it *per accidens* and purely as extrinsic points of reference. And thus, when we say that a separate substance is "in" a certain terrestrial place, this must not be interpreted as implying that it is in that place in the same way that a material part is in a material whole. For a separate substance is not contained by the physical place to which it temporarily applies its power; but in a very real sense "contains" that place as the spiritual contains the material [76]. And thus it happens that a separate substance, without any immediate physical contact, is enabled to exert control over different physical places by a different kind of contact, namely, by the "contact of its power".

The application of the power of separate substances to different places thus seems to be much like the application of the active potency of God to the creation and conservation of all contingent beings. For just as God causes temporal effects through His unchangeable essence [77], so also separate substances cause transient motions through their perfect and unchangeable active power. And just as the power which "goes out" from God in His giving of *esse* to the universe does not proceed from Him at any particular time, but is, considered in itself, co-eternal with His essence; so also, the power which "goes out"from a separate substance as it causes physical motions in time, is merely the result of its own uniform aeviternal operation within its own sphere of authority, which happens to be applied to this or that particular place at some particular time.

E. THE RELATIVE CAPACITIES OF THE ANGELIC HIERARCHIES

Our final consideration in this section on the capacities of separate substances will be given to the relationship of the hierarchical position of separate substances to their relative capacities.

[76] *S. Th.*, I, Q. 52, Art. 1, c.
[77] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 25, Art. 1.

As we have seen above [78], the angelic essence, in so far as it has a privative relationship to all actuality which its form is lacking, has this unfulfilled potency perpetually fulfilled by the *esse* which the form receives, and by the habitual infused species which result from this *esse* as natural "talents", so to speak. As St. Thomas says in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*,

> Since a separate substance is not able to actually embrace all of being by its very nature, it is – if we consider its substance – in potency, as it were, to those intelligible species through which it becomes cognizant of all being; and these species are its act, in so far as it is an intellective being [79].

If we consider the existent angelic substance, we could say that it has a capacity, a quasi-passive potency, for these intelligible species, in so far as it is related to them as subject to accident, to the same extent that, *qua* form and substance, it has a capacity for *esse* [80]. However, if we consider the intellective potency of a separate substance, which is not identical with its substance [81], we find that it itself cannot be called a "capacity". For the angelic intellect is continually in act in regard to its natural knowledge [82], and can be called passive or receptive only with reference to its essence, which is receptive of the substantial *esse* which must be presupposed as the basis for its cognitive powers.

The intellective potency in a separate substance, therefore, must be classified as an active potency rather than a capacity, since it is in act as a whole, just as the agent part of the human intellect is in act according to its nature [83]. And whereas the agent intellect compared to the possible intellect in man is like the participated light of the sun in a diaphanum, the intellect of a separate substance is like the sun itself, which is completely and supremely active in the corporeal sphere [84]. Nor is there any incongruity in the fact that the angelic substance has a capacity for perfection through intelligible species, while the angelic intellect which uses these species has no capacity for perfection. For the intellect of a separate substance is comparable to the vegetative potency in an animal, which is an active potency, even though

[78] Cf. *supra*, p. 54.

[79] *S.C.G.*, II, Ch. 98 : "Cum substantia separata per suam naturam non fiat actu comprehendens totum ens, ipsa, in sua substantia considerata, est quasi potentia ad similitudines intelligibiles quibus totum ens cognoscitur, et illae similitudines erunt actus ejus, inquantum est intellectualis".

[80] *De Subst. Sep.*, Ch. VIII, § 39.

[81] Cf. *S. Th.*, I, Q. 54, Art. 3, c.

[82] *S.C.G.*, II, Ch. 97.

[83] Cf. *In III De Anima*, x, § 732.

[84] Cf. *De Malo*, Q. XVI, a. 12, ad. 1.

in other respects, e.g. in regard to its sense powers, the animal is passive and receptive [85]. Thus we must say that, in respect to its natural knowledge, the intellect of a separate substance has no "capacity" for knowledge, precisely because it connaturally and habitually knows all things.

When St. Thomas says, therefore, that the inferior separate substances have "less act, and more of potency", [86] he does not mean that they have a greater potency or capacity for knowledge, since their intellect belongs to the sphere of their act, rather than their potency. Neither could he mean that their essence has a greater positive capacity [87] for existence, since a greater positive capacity would be less limiting of *esse*; but in the inferior angels there is a more limited *esse* and a correspondingly lesser positive capacity. He must be referring, therefore, 1) to the negative passive potency [88] of inferior subsistent forms, which because of their greater formal deprivations must be "equalized" with superior separate substances through the greater number of infused species which they receive as a concomitant of their *esse* [89]; 2) to the obediential potency of these inferior angels in so far as it is further removed from the supernatural life of God; and 3) to their greater extrinsic transmutability in regard to corporeal motions. These three types of capacities, in so far as they are capacities for an increase in perfection, are correspondingly greater where the participated act is less. They are passive potencies which vary in inverse proportion to their corresponding act and active potency. Therefore the substantial capacity of the inferior angels is greater in the sense that certain perfections which are contained properly in the form of superior angels are received actually with the *esse* of the inferior angels; the obediential capacity of the inferior angels is greater in the sense that they are more passive in the reception of supernatural life and divine illumination, since they have by nature less spontaneous actuality; and the extrinsic capacity for change of corporeal place in inferior angels is greater, in that they have a nature which is less subtle and actual, and thus have more to do with the material universe, and with particular and temporal effects.

When it is said, therefore, that the inferior angels have a greater capacity than the superior angels, this means that they have a "longer way to go" in approximating the pure actuality of God through nature, grace, and extern-

[85] Cf. *S.C.G.*, II, 97 : "Item. Omnis ...".
[86] *De Ente*, Ch. IV.
[87] Cf. *supra*, p. 43.
[88] Cf. *supra*, p. 44.
[89] Cf. *supra*, p. 69.

al activities. The greater capacity of these angels would be analogous to the greater capacity for knowledge that a student of mathematics would have than his teacher, who has learnt "everything there is to know" in his field; to the greater need for grace which the weak man has than the man of "natural virtue"; or the greater and more frequent local motion of soldiers than of the general who commands them.

The lesser capacity of the superior angels, on the other hand, who have simpler impressed species, fewer supernatural accidental perfections, and fewer external local referents, would be analogous to the power of a teacher to teach mathematics rather than learn it; the power of a particular "natural man" to practice naturally a virtue which a particular Christian would need grace to practice; or the power of a general to control many battlefronts without moving from his headquarters. Thus the fact that the superior angels have a lesser capacity than their inferiors for some things, is in no way a derogation in their regard; but on the contrary renders them closest in nature to God, who has no "capacity" to receive any perfection, but only the active power to communicate all perfections. We might also conclude that the highest good angel, with the least capacity for any kind of variability, must participate to an inconceivably high degree in the eternity of God [90], so that we might apply in a relative way to him, as we apply it in the absolute sense to God, the attribute of eternal duration, which Boethius defines as "the embrace in one sweep of the total consummation of an interminable existence [91]".

[90] *Quodlibeta*, V, Art. VII, c.

[91] *De Consolatione*, ult., as quoted by St. Thomas in the *De Aeternitate Mundi* : "[To have an eternal duration means] interminabilis vitae totam pariter complexum esse praesentiam, quod divinae mentis proprium manifestum est".

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